

# Reflective Narrative (remote version)

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This assignment will do well for those of you who want to practice college application or scholarship essays. This assignment is also intended to simply give you an opportunity to use writing as a creative outlet. Turns out expressing yourself through art (and yes, writing counts as art) can be really fun, rewarding, and cathartic (look it up).

## Skills:

- I can engage and orient the reader by
  - setting out a problem, situation, or observation **and its significance**,
  - establishing a point of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters;
  - create a smooth progression of experiences or events
- Write narratives to
  - develop real experiences or events
  - using effective technique,
  - well-chosen details,
  - and well-structured event sequences

## Assignment:

For this assignment, you will create a narrative about an experience in your life that has been meaningful to you in a written medium of your choosing. This can be portrayed fictionally (think *True Diary*) or through non-fiction.

**Project Steps** – While you'll only be turning in a final draft, I highly recommend that you go through the writing process outlined below

- **Prewrite** - Your narrative graphic organizer will help you generate ideas for your story.
- **Outline** - plan out the elements of your narrative.
- **Draft** - The first written version of your project. I recommend just sitting down and knocking this out in about 40-60 minutes.
- **Revise/Edit** - Type up the draft and revise and edit as you go.
- **Final Draft** - Your final product.

### Writing options: (poetry, short stories, personal essays)

- Your narrative should probably be around 2-3 pages long, poems (good poems) should be around 2 pages.
- Written works must show consideration and consistency in characterization, tone, and point of view. (
- Writing should have a clear exposition, conflict, and resolution. (See below for explanation of those aspects, rubric on last page)
- **Timespan within the story cannot be more than 5 minutes!** (for example, you can't write about your entire week long fishing trip, but you can write about the last 5 minutes that you fought a fish before pulling in a 10 pound steelhead. Nice fish!)

## Narrative Elements

"Narrative" simply means telling what happened. It is quite likely that you will not discover the point until you have spent some time working on it. Here are the three elements ALL narratives have:

### ARTICLE: ["HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL NARRATIVE"](#)

#### Exposition

Exposition is the background information necessary for a reader to understand the story. The exposition in the opening paragraphs reveals setting and situation through dialogue, a character's thoughts or words, or through the author's narration. It doesn't reveal everything at once, but sets the scene in a meaningful way. This is done in photographs as well. Check out Amanda Lucier's [Lurlena, Sturgeon, Missouri](#). Not only does it show the

subject, a sad little girl, it captures just the right amount of background—the darkness of the room and her pageant dress. That's great storytelling/setting creation.

### Conflict/Complication (or rising action)

Complication is the story itself. What is this story about? What is the problem presented to the protagonist? This part of the narrative develops the story by introducing conflict. Conflict creates a series of events and a story arc leading to an ending. Look at [Death of Socrates](#). This one shows great detail, but also the problem: poor Socrates being condemned to death by being forced to drink poison. Anguish ensues.

### Resolution

The resolution is the story's ending. It concludes the narrative if the piece is a personal or fictional anecdote or provides some amount of closure or indication of what happened. This task is obviously difficult for all, but check out how Frederick Leighton does this in his painting [The Reconciliation of the Montagues and the Capulets](#). Remember three things about endings:

1. They don't need to end exactly how they did in real life. Sometimes in fiction, the best 'true' story comes from the bending of truth to lead an audience to feel what the author wants the reader to feel.
2. They should be inevitable, not predictable.
3. They only need to end enough to make whatever point or create the feeling you want your reader to understand. They don't have to wrap everything up in a pretty package that explains everything.

### What makes a good personal narrative?

- A good narrative will take the reader **step by step through the experience**, but not only through plot.
- A good narrative **uses the senses** to describe things. The reader wants to smell, touch, taste, hear and see the story unfold.
- A good narrative doesn't have to be 100 percent truthful. If bending the truth effectively enhances part of the experience, then that's ok.

### Here are some great examples of narratives in different styles

Short Story	Ernest Hemingway – <a href="#">“Hills Like White Elephants”</a> Ray Bradbury – <a href="#">“The Last Night of the World”</a>
Essay	Sherman Alexie – <a href="#">“Superman and Me”</a>
Poetry	Raymond Carver – <a href="#">“Another Mystery”</a> Kendrick Lamar – <a href="#">“How Much a Dollar Cost”</a>

## Getting started

### How do I get started?

Look at your graphic organizer (done in class) and narrative ideas. Do not attempt to write about a large chunk of time, such as “My 11 years at Lockwood,” or “Soccer!” Instead, the essay should examine in detail a single event such as, “My first high school track meet,” or “The first time I was truly happy/sad.” Pay attention in class so you know how to free-write or create a graphic organizer.

IMPORTANT NOTE: **Keep a copy of the brainstorm and graphic organizer.**

### What do I do after the prewrite?

Once you have done a free-write or idea map and you think you have identified a good project topic, write a draft of what you remember about that time. (Even if you're doing an artistic project, you must write this portion.) Perfection is not required! Just write about a page and a half or two pages about your topic or sketch out an idea of how you plan to portray your idea. You may do this by hand or on the computer.

IMPORTANT NOTE: **Remember to save a copy to turn in with your essay or art.**

**What do I do during the revising process?**

Revising is the time to move things around, and figure out where you need more development or need to delete something because it doesn't fit. Print this draft out and annotate the page making corrections and suggestions to yourself. *Did you make it this far with reading?* Good! You probably have a decent idea of what you need to be doing. Finish reading this page and take a look at the starter ideas I have on the last page if you're stuck. Then, post a class comment (not a private comment) on the assignment in Google Classroom of your favorite artist as well as a link to their work. Could be a painter, poet, writer, musician. Doesn't matter. Do make it school appropriate though.

***Can't think of anything...maybe one of these will work for you! These are just suggestions.***

## **NARRATIVE ESSAY IDEAS**

**1. [Lightbulb Moment]** Think of an experience when you realized that you suddenly understood an idea, a skill, or a concept you had been struggling with -- it might be something related to a class that you took or a specific athletic skill you were trying to perfect. For instance, you might think about trying to understand a particular science project. Or, you might consider trying to perfect your free throws and suddenly understanding how your follow-through was affecting your success. Write a narrative that tells the story of your movement toward understanding. How did you finally come to understand? What changed your perceptions and gave you a new understanding? Your project should help readers understand how you felt to struggle with the idea or skill and then to understand.

**2. [Childhood Event]** Choose a vivid time from your childhood -- You might think of the first time that you rode a school bus, of a time when you went to the principal's office, the first fish you caught or the first time you shot a gun, the first A you earned on a test or paper, earning money to buy something that you really wanted, and so on. Narrate the events related to the childhood memory that you've chosen so that your readers will understand why the event was important and memorable.

**3. [Achieving a Goal]** Think of a time when you achieved a personal goal -- you might have finally completed a 10k, or you might have made a team you tried out for, or you might have learned how to use a piece of software. Tell your readers about the story of how you met your goal. Be sure that your readers understand why the goal is important to you.

**4. [The Good and the Bad]** Think about an event in your life that seemed bad but turned out to be good. Maybe you got injured and while you were waiting for your broken leg to heal, you learned how to play the guitar. What makes the event change from bad to good may be something that you learned as a result, something that you did differently as a result, or something that happened that wouldn't have occurred otherwise. Tell the story of the event that you experienced and help your readers understand how an event that seemed negative turned out to have valuable consequences.

**5. [Changing Places]** Every place has things that change -- sometimes as the result of economics, sometimes because different people are involved, and sometimes for no clear reason that you know about. Think of a change to a place that you know well. Perhaps the local grocery store you grew up with as Lockwood IGA was bought out by a regional chain like Albertsons. For me, it was the local video store in Lockwood that was put out of business by Blockbuster. Think of a specific change and narrate the events that occurred. Readers should know the details of the change, and they should know how you feel about the changes that occurred (But don't just tell them you felt sad. SHOW them).

**6. [Standing Up]** Choose a time when you did something that took a lot of nerve, a time when you didn't follow the crowd or a time when you stood up for your beliefs. Perhaps your friends were urging you to do something that you were uncomfortable with and you chose not to cave into peer pressure. Maybe you took a stance on a political issue that was important in your community, or you might have. Whatever you choose, think about the details of the event and write a story that tells about what happened. Your narrative should show your readers why you decided to make a stand or try something that took nerve, give specifics on the events, and share how you felt after the event.

## **Personal Narrative Essay Rubric (110)**

### **Ideas/insight**

- I established a problem, situation, or observation with my exposition (20)
- I created a smooth progression of experiences or events (the story connects and makes sense) with rising action (20)
- I clearly address the significance of the event (explicitly or implicitly) with my conclusion (20)

### **Word/detail choice**

- My words or visual elements are specific and accurate, bringing in more than just plot or action (10)
- Sentences vary in length and structure (10)
- Focus on sensory details (10)

### **Revisions and Editing**

- Conventions (grammar, spellings, format) (10)
- MLA Format (10)