

Language & Literacy Narrative Brainstorms Worksheet

Your name:

--

Below you will write about four different memories from your life that connect to your experiences with language (speaking, listening, presenting, accents, learning new languages) and literacy (reading and writing in any language).

Your goal is to identify **specific moments** in your life you recall that are particularly vivid or that emerge as being important or significant or just memorable to you.

Examples of **specific moments**:

- My mom used to read to me every night. One night, she was tired and fell asleep. It was my first chance to read on my own, and I did pretty well.
- I learned my fourth language at age twelve. It was particularly challenging since I was brand new to the language and new to the culture.
- Last week on the subway, my cousin and I were talking when a stranger shouted at us, "Speak English! This is America!" But we were already speaking English!
- I only spoke Spanish at home and was placed in ESL classes in kindergarten. I remember being taken out of class and the stress of figuring out how to speak English and make friends.
- When I was 12, I had a few tutoring sessions that changed my perspective on reading. My tutor's own love of reading old literature inspired me a lot.
- I won a poetry contest when I was 10. I always liked writing songs and poems, and it was special to get the chance to read my work aloud to an audience.
- In high school, I wrote a story about my grandma's culture that meant a lot to me. My teacher returned my essay with red marks all over but no comments.

FREEWRITE TIME! (aka write without stopping or worrying)

Read and respond to all six prompts below.

Feel free to use paragraphs or make a bulleted list.

TIP: The more details you add and the more you put into reflecting now, the better off you'll be in completing our major assignment for our first phase of this course: *narrating ONE moment from your language and literacy experiences, using vivid details and rich description.*

1. Think back to a particularly **memorable moment** that has to do with your language and/or literacy (aka reading/writing). It could be a moment of curiosity, confusion, tension, or triumph. What's the first thing that pops into your mind? What happened? How old were you? Where were you? Who was there? How did it feel?

2. Try to recall **an example from your earliest memories** of *learning* to speak, read, and write (in school or elsewhere and in any language). Try to think of a particular moment that stands out to you. How old were you? Where were you? Who was there? What happened? What texts or objects were involved? How did it feel?

3. Think back to **a time when you were learning a new language or literacy**. Maybe you learned a different language or version of English? Maybe you learned a new way to read or write (perhaps in different peer groups, at school, at work, with family, online, in different locations across the nation or world). Try to think of a particular moment that stands out to you. What happened? How old were you? Where were you? Who was there? How did it feel?

4. Try to recall **your last experience in an English/writing class**. Maybe it was just last semester, or your senior year of high school, or some summer or other program. Can you think of a particular moment from that experience that stands out to you? What happened? How old were you? Where were you? Who was there? How did it feel?

5. Now choose JUST ONE specific moment from your language and literacy experiences (from any of your brainstorms above or even a new idea) that feels most meaningful to you. **Write 200-300 words describing that one specific moment, adding additional vivid details.** Your goal is to get your reader to see what you saw, feel what you felt, think what you thought, and to smell/taste/hear what you smelled/tasted/heard. Vividly describe the setting, people involved, and what happened.

6. Now **write another ~200 words** about the importance or significance of the moment you've just described above. Freewrite in sentences or in a list in response to these questions:

- Why do you think this moment feels so memorable or meaningful?
- How, if at all, did this moment impact or change you?
- How, if at all, does this moment reflect who you are, what you care about, and / or how you identify (racially, linguistically, nationally, culturally, religiously, gender-wise, family-wise, student-wise, etc.)?
- What might others learn or gain from hearing about this moment? Would folks likely relate or be surprised? Could it maybe show or teach us something about society, culture, family dynamics, educational systems, teaching practices, relationships, learning, national trends, policies and politics?