

Narrative/Literacy Autobiography Prompt

So far in this class we have looked, primarily, at two things:

1. Why we write
2. How we write

To me, the first question is much easier to answer than the latter. The “why” is usually easier than the “how” in life. In this class, and in terms of our writing, we have discussed “writing” as a means of *communication*, and the ways that writing is a major component of both language and communication (two ideas that are mutually exclusive). While you can have both without writing (non-verbal communication, Oral traditions, etc.), you cannot have writing without both.

This writing is an *opportunity* for each of you to share an experience with a reader and to explore your own experiences with *communication*, *language*, and personal growth.

In doing so, remember two things:

1. You are writing a personal story that should connect the reader to some experience that he or she can *relate* to. Remember: Your story should have a *meaning*; something that the reader can identify as important to a larger audience. We are going for extra-personal communication here; we want to *relate* a story to an audience.
2. Your voice counts! Even though you are writing to an academic audience (myself, your peers), we would still like to hear *your voice*. After all, this is a story about you. Don't try too hard to adapt your writing to any generic “template.” This is an opportunity to be *you*. After all this is *your* story, isn't it?

Here are your prompts (choose one):

1. Write about a time in which communication, or the lack thereof, afforded you an opportunity to overcome a difficulty, or created an opportunity for personal growth. In other words, write about a time when communication acted as either a barrier or a blessing in your life.
2. Write about an event in your life that changed the way you think. Perhaps this event made you take yourself and your education more seriously. Perhaps it is the reason you are here today. Pick that kind of a “major” event in your life and tell the reader the story. (Remember to *relate* your story to your reader!)

Good luck, try to have fun with it, and remember: You own this. This is *your story*. Take this as an opportunity to do a bit of self-examination. You might find, as you go about writing this story that you are still learning from it. Writing is one of **the best** methods and tools of *self-reflection*.

LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

[CONTEXTUALIZATION]

Simply stated, a literacy autobiography is a personal historical account of our experiences in learning to read, write, and interpret the world around us. In this course we have read both Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary* and Gerald Graff's "Disliking Books at an Early Age." Both of these authors use their experiences as students to educate others about how that experience can serve as larger examples of problems in education. While these authors make different arguments about education, they both analyze their experiences in order to give insight to readers about what those experiences illustrate.

[PURPOSE]

For this essay you will write a similar Literacy Autobiography. You might focus on one or two events from a specific period of time, or you might use several events from a larger time span. These experiences may differ significantly depending on the events and time periods you feel are important to relating your story. For instance, one person might write primarily about his or her experiences in grammar school, another about how a brother, sister, or parent, helped or discouraged him or her (or vice versa), and another about their last year of high school. One person might write about his or her experiences being in bilingual education and another might write about negotiating two separate linguistic worlds (i.e. home and school). Like everything we learn, becoming "literate" (in this course meaning reading and interpreting the world) is both an uneven and collective process.

[RHETORICAL SITUATION]

As we have discussed, in this essay you will have to **ANALYZE** your experience. That means you will have to interpret for your readers how they should understand the narrative events you are writing about. When you are writing something like a literacy autobiography, even though you may write different pieces of your history in one story, you have to have a "narrative thread." That means you have to connect all of the pieces together you have written. Remember, you are writing to other academics about an issue you think needs to be addressed in education using your own history as evidence.

[LOGISTICS]

- 1st drafts of your papers will be due 3/12. Your 1st draft needs to be at least 2 pages in length. You will need to bring copies of your papers for your group to workshop.
- 2nd drafts will be due 3/24. 2nd drafts should be at least 3 pages in length.
- Your final draft will need to be in MLA format

[POINTERS, REMINDERS]

1. Do not let the storytelling take over the essay. Remember, you are using your history as a tool to make a larger social claim. Do not lose sight, and remind your readers, of your controlling idea.
2. Be discriminating about what you choose to include and what you don't.
3. Remember, this essay is not about "what you learned from your experience, but what your experience can teach your audience.

[EVALUATION]

See attached rubric for grading criteria