

What's Your Story?

Personal Narrative Essay Assignment


Assignment: For this writing assignment, you will write an essay about an incident or experience in your life that has been meaningful to you. Choosing a very specific place or time will help you write the essay. Develop the essay with details that will demonstrate the significance of your experience.

Your essay must:

- Be 2-3 pages, typed, MLA format
- Meet the prompt topic
- Include a hook/thesis, sensory details, direct quotes, and meet all of the rubric requirements

How will it be graded?

Your grade will be based not only on the final product, but also on showing that you **completed all the steps of the writing process**. These steps are:

- Graphic Organizer (homework grade) due: **Monday, October 31** 
- Draft (quiz grade) due: **Wednesday, November 9**
- Peer Editing Workshop Ticket (class grade): **Wednesday, November 9**
- Final Essay (test grade) due: **Monday, November 14**

What is a Narrative Essay?

“Narrative” means telling what happened. An essay is different from a story in that the narrative in the essay is a tool that’s used to make a point. It’s pretty likely that you will not discover the point until you have spent some time working on it.

What makes a good personal narrative?

- A good personal narrative will take the reader step by step through the experience.
- A good personal narrative uses the senses to describe things. The reader wants to smell, touch, taste, hear and see the story unfold.
- A good personal narrative incorporates dialogue and metaphors along with good sensory description.
- A good personal narrative doesn't have to be 100% truthful. If bending the truth effectively enhances part of the experience, then that’s ok.

Personal Narrative Essay Rubric

Possible points 100

	Poor (1)			Excellent (6)		
All attachments are turned in Graphic Organizer, 1 st draft copy, peer workshop, this scoring sheet	1	2	3	4	5	6
Document Format Paper is the required length (2-3 pages) Typed, double spaced, 12-pt font, MLA	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ideas Writer explains why this narrative is significant (or What's the point?)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Topic is focused	1	2	3	4	5	6
Evidence is provided where needed	1	2	3	4	5	6
Organization Introduction	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conclusion	1	2	3	4	5	6
Transitions between new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voice Tone is appropriate to content	1	2	3	4	5	6
Personality of the reader is present	1	2	3	4	5	6
Word choice Words are specific and accurate		1	2	3	4	5
6 Language is appropriate for audience	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sentence fluency Sentences vary in length and structure	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sentences transition and flow well with one another	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conventions All words spelled correctly	1	2	3	4	5	6
Punctuation, capitalization is accurate	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 Grammar & usage correct		1	2	3	4	5

Score:

100

_____ /

Comments:

NARRATIVE ESSAY PROMPTS (choose one)

1. [Being Unprepared] Because you have been sick, out of town, busy at work, or working on other homework, you didn't have as much time to study for an important test as you needed. Everyone going to school has been in this situation. Think of a specific test that you took that you felt unprepared for and narrate the events. Tell your readers about the preparation that you were able to do, the reasons that you didn't get to prepare as well as you wanted, taking the test, and any significant events that happened after you took the test. Your paper should help readers understand what it felt like to be unprepared.
2. [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 how to identify iambic pentameter in a poem or how to complete a Taylor Series problem in your Calculus class. 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 paper should help readers understand how you felt to struggle with the idea or skill and then to understand.
3. [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 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.
4. [Achieving a Goal] Think of a time when you achieved a personal goal -- you might have finally completed a marathon or triathlon, or you might have bettered your score on the SATs or another test, or you might have learned how to use a piece of software like Microsoft Word or Excel. 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.
5. [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 use a computer. 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.
6. [Being a Teacher] Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Think of a skill that you've taught someone else how to do. Perhaps you taught someone else how to swim, showed someone how to bake a souffle, or helped someone learn how to study more effectively. Think about the events that made up the process of teaching the skill, and narrate the story for your readers.
7. [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 Smith and Bros. Grocery was bought out by a regional chain like Food Lion or Winn Dixie. Maybe the First National Bank of Smithburg suddenly becomes NationsBank. Perhaps the change was more personal -- an older sibling moves out of the house and your family changes the room to a guest room or an office. 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.

8. [Personal Rituals] Describe a personal ritual that you, your friends, or your family have. Think about the personal steps that you always go through when you prepare for an exam. Do you sit at a desk, spread books and notes across your bed, or use the kitchen table? Do you have to have something to drink...soda, water, jolt? There are numerous things that we do for which we create our own personal rituals. Choose one event -- studying for a test, writing a paper, dressing and warming up before a game, or preparing and having a special family meal. Narrate the events that take place when you complete your ritual so that your readers understand the steps that the ritual includes and why you complete them.

9. [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.

10. [Disagreeing] Think of a time when you disagreed with a decision that had been made and did something about it. The decision might have been made by someone you know personally -- your Biology teacher announced a new policy to grade for spelling and grammar on your quizzes and homework, or an older family member decides to cancel a subscription to a magazine that you liked to read. You might have responded by discussing your concerns with your principal or dean, or you might have decided to get a part-time job to earn enough money to buy the magazine yourself. Or the decision could have been made by someone you never met -- perhaps your school board decided to change the lines in your school district so that you would have to go to a different school, or your state legislature has passed a bill that you disagreed with. Your response might have been to write a letter to the editor, to your state representative, or to the school board. Whatever happened, your job is to write a paper that narrates the events that occurred -- from the decision that was made to your response. Be sure that your paper gives enough details that your readers understand why you disagreed with the decision and why you felt that your response was appropriate.

Guided Notes

The Narrative Essay: It Differs from a Simple Story!

What is a narrative essay?

A narrative is a story that has a specific point

A narrative essay strives to _____ or

A narrative essay strives to make a specific point

A narrative essay is NOT a _____ ---the story is linked to
the
purpose of the essay

What should be included in a Narrative Essay?

Often written in _____ I or we

Can also be written in _____ person

Has specific sensory details to get the reader hooked on the story

Is developed in _____

Has _____ to help paint a picture

Planning the Narrative Essay

Write a _____, just as any other essay

_____ for a personal story or observation that proves the thesis
statement

Outline or web the important parts of the story

Write an introductory paragraph that includes the thesis statement, and then write the story

Write the conclusion that reflects on the thesis statement

Start with a Thesis Statement

The thesis will depend upon the story to be proven

The thesis can be something general in the case of a narrative. For example:

“Oftentimes people do not follow simple directions. However, these campers learned how important following directions can be.”

What would You Expect from this Thesis?

As a reader, you will expect to learn why _____.

As the reader, you will expect to _____.

As a reader, you will expect there to be a twist in the action.

Additional Ideas for Your Thesis

Without a thesis, or point, you are not writing a _____, but a narrative

- make sure to have a _____. You can get help finding a point when you:

- Think about sayings or quotes that _____

- Think about a time when you learned something _____

- Read _____ to get good ideas

- Think back to _____ you've heard your friends or family tell

Writing Exercise #1: Ghost Story



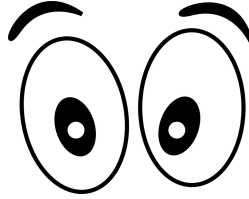
Prompt: Have you or anyone you know ever had a ghostly encounter? What happened? Write the narrative below. Remember, in a personal narrative, things don't have to be 100% true (so if you don't have an actual story...make one up).

Beginning

Middle

End

Writing Exercise #2



Directions: Convert these “telling” statements into “showing” statements.

Tell: Ms. Hall was upset with a student.

Show:

Tell: The cake was disgusting.

Show:

Tell: Science class was boring today.

Show:

Tell: After it rained, a rainbow appeared.

Show:

Tell: They gave the dog a bath.

Show:

Tell: There was a castle in the distance.

Show:

Tell: Odysseus strung the bow.

Show:

Writing Great Dialogue

Dialogue Punctuation Rules

Get ahead of the game! Learn these rules, and you'll avoid obvious mistakes:

1. Use a comma between the dialogue and the tag line (the words used to identify the speaker: "he said/she said"):

"I would like to go to the beach this weekend," she told him as they left the apartment.

2. Periods and commas go inside the quotation marks in American writing (the Brits have slightly different rules); other punctuation -- semicolons, question marks, dashes, and exclamation points -- goes outside unless it directly pertains to the material within the quotes, as in this example from Raymond Carver's short story "Where I'm Calling From":

"I don't want any stupid cake," says the guy who goes to Europe and the Middle East. "Where's the champagne?" he says, and laughs.

In the next example, the question mark goes outside the quotation marks because it is not part of the material being quoted:

Did he say, "We should all go to the movies"?

Also note that the sentence ends with only one mark of punctuation: the question mark. In general, don't use double punctuation marks, but go with the stronger punctuation. (Question marks and exclamation points are stronger than commas and periods. Think of it as a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors, if it helps.)

3. When a tag line interrupts a sentence, it should be set off by commas. Note that the first letter of the second half of the sentence is in lower case, as in this example from Flannery O'Connor's story "Greenleaf":

"That is," Wesley said, "that neither you nor me is her boy..."

4. To signal a quotation within a quotation, use single quotes:

"Have you read 'Hills Like White Elephants' yet?" he asked her.

Write down a dialogue that you had with someone today or that you overheard in proper format:

Peer Editing workshop

Writer's Name: _____

1st Editor's Name: _____

Is the writer's hook engaging? Yes No

Is the thesis/purpose of the essay clear? Yes No

Write the thesis on the line: _____

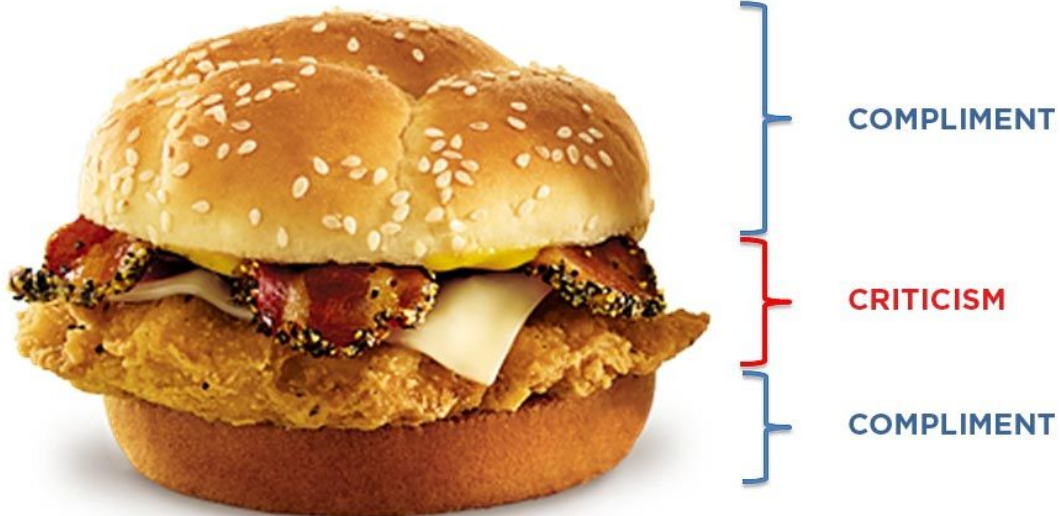
Is the essay organized well? (Beginning, middle, end, and transitions) Yes No

Is the author's voice/personality apparent? Yes No

How many mechanical, grammatical errors did you find?

Few Several Too many

Compliment Sandwich:



Peer Editing Workshop

Writer's Name: _____

2nd Editor's Name: _____

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