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ENGL 101

Sec. 001, 022

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Narrative Essay

Prompt

**Write an essay in which you describe an experience in which you learned something.**

The prompt for this assignment is purposefully open ended because narrative essays (and creative nonfiction in general) is the same way. There is no need to argue for a position because learning is subjective, however, you should reiterate what it is that you learned. Learning does not necessarily have to mean in the context of school.

A traditional way to approach this assignment is through the genre of the literacy narrative, in which the writer describes their process of learning a literacy. In this context, literacy often means learning to read and write (or some other school related experience) but you do not need to write about a school related experience. The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives may provide some inspiration for approaching this assignment as a literacy narrative: [www.thedaln.org/#/home](http://www.thedaln.org/#/home).

You should focus on a single experience, or a related group of experiences for your work to have cohesion. Because no argument is necessary, it is important to focus more so on matters of organization and context. Assume that your readers may not be familiar with the references you make in your piece and use your best judgment to provide as much context as you can to help them.

Recursiveness

Writing is a recursive process. The writer frequently moves from prewriting to drafting to editing and revising. The emphasis in college writing courses is on process, not product. In other words, writing is not about getting it right the first and only time, it is about improvement from draft to draft. To improve from one draft to another, the writer must be able to respond to critical feedback from their instructor and their peers. This is true regardless of the point of the writer’s work: to entertain, inform, argue a point, etc.

Questions for Consideration

Some questions that you should address in answering the prompt include:

* What lesson(s) did you learn from your experience?
* Who or what helped you learn these lessons?
* If you could redo the experience you wrote about, what would you change in how you acted (if anything)?
* How will you use what you learned from the experience in the future; how will it help you to prepare for similar (or different) experiences?

Organization

In contrast to argumentative essays, where you should state your thesis somewhere in the first paragraph, you have some flexibility in terms of where you sum up the point of your essay (by stating what you learned). You may find it better to wait until the end of your piece because that is the last thing a reader will read. You do not need to repeat the point of your essay. It is better to have more paragraphs than fewer so try to not insert more than one point in each paragraph of your piece.

Style

An assignment like this works best in 1st person prose. Dialogue may work better than describing what you said to others and vice versa, if your piece discusses other people. Also, you may find it beneficial to use pen names for the people you write about if you are concerned about them being revealed in your piece.

Your essay should otherwise adhere to MLA format (or a scholarly citation format of your choice) and should include page numbers in the top right of each page with your last name preceding the number. Citation and a works cited page are both required if you are quoting directly from previously published material but not if you are quoting from the words of friends, family, etc. that came up in conversation.

Your essay must be at least three full, double-spaced pages to not be penalized for lack of length. The header of your essay and title count towards the page length but the works cited page (if applicable) does not. Your essay should have a creative title that previews what it will discuss.

Due Dates

The first draft is due in class 9 September 2019. Please bring at least one printed (or digital) copy of your essay for peer review. You will receive digital feedback on your drafts from your instructor.

The final draft is due in class 27 September 2019. Please submit your first and final drafts digitally on the course Moodle page.