Instructor: Jenna Alexander

ENGL 3100

Spring 2015 (Section 06)

**Unit 1: Reflective Literacy Narrative**

**Introduction**

People often think of personal experience as a non-academic form of writing. But many scholars, including Donald Murray, argue that personal experience can serve as evidence to support your arguments. Because personal experience can be useful in academic settings, it is important for you to learn how to craft reflective personal experience into the form of a narrative. Writing a reflective personal narrative involves more than relating a series of events; rather, it focuses on finding the *significance* in the series of events.

**Brainstorming and Research**

Start your literacy narrative by considering your *history* as a reader, writer, speaker, listener, and critical thinker. Think about your ideas and attitudes about literacy and *how* those ideas and attitudes developed. What kinds of reading and writing have you done in the past? How did you feel about this reading and writing? What particular literacy memories are significant to you? What people, institutions, and communities shaped your ideas about literacy? As you think about the answers to these questions, you should begin to focus on 1-2 specific events or influences that you want to explore in more depth. Using some of the narrative writing strategies we’ve discussed in class, (sensory detail, pacing, dialogue, etc.), **write a narrative – a story – about those events**.

**Analysis/Reflection**

As you tell your story, you will arrive at an overall argument, central “finding,” thesis, or conclusion. You might, for example, reach an insight about why you read and write as you do today. You might formulate an argument about what works or doesn’t work in literacy education. You might examine a re-occurring theme in your work. Or you might describe an ongoing conflict or tension that you experience when you read or write.

During the process of writing and analyzing your story, you may explore the ways in which your ideas about writing were *constructed*. In other words, your analysis might shed light on how a particular construct, myth, or conception about literacy operates in our society. Or you could use your personal narrative to expand upon one of the ideas about literacy that we’ve discussed in class (such as healing, power struggles, writing processes, revision, etc.). This reflective analysis could be located at the beginning of the story, at the end of the story, or interspersed throughout. Regardless, it should be substantive and thoughtful.

**Goals**

The goals of this assignment are (one) to use storytelling strategies to write a personal narrative and (two) to use reflective analysis to make connections between your past influence(s) and your current literate self.

**Content**

For this assignment, you’ll write a 3-5 page paper in which you focus on one (or possibly two) influences or events in your personal literacy development. Not only will you want to tell the story of that influence, but you’ll want to spend time reflecting on *why* it was influential and *how* it brought you to where you are today.

**The Process and Writing Calendar**

**Wednesday, February 11 through Friday, February 13** – Conferences (first draft/prewriting due at the conference)

**Wednesday, February 18 –** Second draft due (bring two copies)

**Monday, February 23** – Portfolio 1 due (along with the final draft of Paper 1)

Rubric/Requirements (Please note that some items, like reflection, are worth more points than others. Also, these requirements are subject to change as announced.)

Structure/Organization:

* Follow prompt, use approved topic
* Clear purpose
* Focus on 1-2 events or influences
* Well-written thesis that represents the essay in its entirety
* Introduction is attention-getting
* Clear organization that emphasizes content and analysis over chronology
* Plot: beginning, middle, and end are present and developed (though not necessarily in that order)
* Thoughtful, appropriate, and logical sequence/plot with appropriate paragraphing
* Clear transitions
* Resolution/conclusion

Development/Detail:

* Analysis/reflection explores the relationship between the event and your current literary self
* Descriptive, vivid, and sensory language
* Shows, doesn’t (just) tell
* Figurative language, including metaphors or similes, to describe the experience
* Developed characters
* Voice: maintains a consistent and life-like voice
* Dialogue: brings characters’ voices to life
* Appropriate to the audience
* Avoids clichés, language that is too formal, and easy answers
* Demonstrates maturity and professionalism
* Revision – makes substantial changes from draft to draft, not just sentence-level changes

Polish:

* Clarity
* Grammar and mechanics
* Active verbs
* Sentence structure and variety
* Punctuation