

NARRATIVE ESSAY

Overview

During this semester you will write three essays, each emphasizing a different configuration of the abilities needed for successful college-level writing, and each addressing a different rhetorical situation. This will be the first of these essays and will focus on description, idea-driven narrative, and compelling, insightful expression of personal experience. We will develop this essay over three weeks across three drafts.

Rhetorical Situation

In this essay you will write to a popular, general audience interested in reflective experiences of education. Building on your practice of compelling description in the personal experience exercise, this essay will channel descriptive writing into a more thematic and reflective form. The goal will not only be to share a compelling description of an experience (as you had in exercise #1, but this time on education), but also to do so in order to express an idea or feeling *about* that experience.

It may be helpful to imagine this as a topical opinion piece for a newspaper written by someone who has had an experience that exemplifies some issue, idea, or feeling. In these types of pieces the author narrates their experience not only to share, but also to illuminate, inspire, and generate reflection on the issue, idea, or feeling that they perceive in their own experience.

Preparation

In order to write this essay you will need to:

1. Identify a personal experience of education that you find compelling
2. Develop a critical understanding of that experience in order to identify a point of interest for readers

The materials we discuss in class (Robinson, Whitehead, Meyer, Le Guin, Wallace, West) are resources for thinking about your experience of education, providing ideas, topical concerns, critical angles, and contexts that open up your appreciation of your experience and hopefully inspire writing. You are not required to mention any of these in your writing, though you may do so if it serves your writing goals. The main task is to find some way to find a new perspective on your experience, enabling you to get beyond simply describing your experience and to expressing a crafted narrative essay that interprets that experience.

The two general strategies to develop your essay topic are:

1. Experience first: To identify an experience (an event, moment, theme, dynamic, sequence of events, etc.) that you think is interesting and exemplary of some lesson, issue, idea, or feeling *first*, then use the course materials for language and ideas to help you explore and interpret that experience.
2. Theme first: Locate an issue, idea, or aspect of education discussed in the course materials that you find compelling, then seek a connection in your own experience.

Process

The draft schedule due dates for this essay is as follows:

Discovery Draft: 9/19

Working Draft: 9/26

Polished Draft: 10/1

For your Discovery Draft focus on getting your chosen experience and interpretation of it on paper. Do not worry about eloquence or structure - just get the thoughts down for peer review and feedback. Please use the Standard Manuscript format for each draft.

Submission

Bring a printed copy of your draft to class. This copy will be used in peer review. Additionally, submit a digital copy for my feedback in one of two ways:

1. Share the Google document of your essay with tschenold@cornish.edu, enabling comments so I can leave targeted feedback.
2. Email an RTF file as an attachment to tschenold@cornish.edu. Your word processing software will have an ability to "Save As..." to an RTF file. This will ensure that I can handle the file. Please also make sure you name the file "LastnameFirstinitial_NE.rft" (so, if I were submitting it would be "SchenoldT_NE.rft").