

APPENDIX D

Exploratory-Reflective Essay Assignment

GOALS

- To hone your research and analysis skills
- To expand your understanding of topics and questions in literacy studies and about literacy narratives
- To work more closely with the DALN
- To reflect on your research processes

ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, you will compose a 4-7 page exploratory-reflective essay in which you *explore* primary archival research by engaging in a mini-DALN study and then *reflect* on the process of engaging with the DALN and primary research.

1. **Select texts.** Choose three texts from the DALN that to analyze—any kind of text is permitted (audio, video, image, collage, print). These texts should all contain at least one keyword that is the same. These texts will be used for your mini-DALN study.
2. **Analyze texts.** Analyze the texts by answering the following two questions: "How is writing portrayed?" and "How is reading portrayed?" Read/view the texts multiple times and code and analyze the data according to those two questions. Analyze your findings and make an argument about them. Take good notes. Also read the texts looking for aspects that intrigue, surprise, or challenge you or your view of literacy. Consider whether you want to address these in your analysis.
3. **Write exploratory-reflective essay.** Your essay will contain two sections: exploratory and reflective. In the exploratory section, you will make a claim, an argument, and use the literacy narratives as support for your claims. In the reflective section, you will reflect on the processes of research and analysis. As you compose your essay, consider the following questions:

Exploratory section

- a. How does the text relate to issues of literacy, identity, writing, rhetoric, story, culture, and so on?
- b. What does the text reveal about literacy, literacy practices, values, identity, etc.?
- c. What might you infer about the speaker/writer? Why? How? On what evidence do you base this assessment?
- d. What do these narratives have in common? What are their key differences?
- e. What "new" literacies did you observe in the texts you analyzed?

Reflective section

- a. How did you approach the task?
- b. What research questions guided your search? Why were you interested in those questions? Did other questions emerge as you read, listened to, or watched the literacy narratives?
- c. What were you initially looking for? Why? What did you end up finding?
- d. Why did you choose the texts you chose? What was challenging about finding texts to select?
- e. How do the texts you chose compare to your own experiences?
- f. What was difficult about using the DALN?
- g. What did you learn about archival research? How have you developed archival literacy?