

RESEARCH AND WRITING PROCESS

The steps to this project are similar to the steps you took in the exploratory-reflective essay.

Step 1: Select Texts

Select 5-15 artifacts from the DALN for use in this project. These can be any texts you want, including alphabetic, audio video, or some other kind of text.

Step 2: Read/Watch/View Texts

Read the texts multiple times. As you read, pose questions about the texts. What stands out to you? What questions does the text bring to mind? How does the text compare with what we have read or what you know about literacy or literacy narratives? How does the text compare with your own experiences? And so on. Keep asking questions until the texts begin to say something to you—to speak to you in some way. Begin to clarify a research question.

Step 3: Read Secondary Sources

In conjunction with your data collection (Step 2) and analysis (Step 3), you will want to test your perceptions and findings against others' research and writing by conducting scholarly research. The purpose of this research is not to get hard "facts"; rather, it is to test your assumptions, to develop new perspectives, to shed light on the literacy narratives, and to be able to contextualize and frame your research. In other words, research at this stage is "heuristic"; it helps you reach new understanding.

Here are some useful resources for you as you read:

- **CompPile.** A searchable database of publications in writing studies, including topics on literacy, college composition, rhetoric, multimodal composing, technical writing, ESL, discourse analysis, amongst numerous other topics. comppile.org/search/comppile_main_search.php
- **The Bedford Online Bibliography for Teachers of Writing.** A searchable database with summaries of thousands of articles in writing studies. bb.bedfordstmartins.com/
- **Writing Matters Bibliographies.** Bibliographies on hundreds of topics in writing studies. rebeccamoorehoward.com/bibliographies
- **Rhetoric and Composition Journals (You can access these journals through our library):** *College Composition and Communication; College English; Composition Forum; Composition Studies; Computers and Composition; Computers and Composition Online; Journal of Advanced Composition; Literacy in Composition Studies; Reflections: A Journal of Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing, and Service Learning; Rhetoric Review; Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy; Rhetoric Society Quarterly; Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture.*

Step 4: Code and Analyze Literacy Narratives from the DALN

Begin to settle on a research question and analyze the data seeking answers. For instance, you might ask, "What do the data reveal about learning to read and write?" "What are the literacy practices of this person?" "How do one's literacy practices compare to other members?" "When did the positive experiences with literacy occur? Negative ones?" "Who are the sponsors of literacy?" "What can we learn about writing by studying these people?" "What are the connections between literacy and faith, literacy and identity, literacy and gender, literacy and place, etc.?" As you read through the data, focus on what's interesting, confusing, illuminating, strange, or significant. Then, find themes and categorize the research. You might have to go back to secondary sources to see how your findings compare to others. Or, go back to the data again. Remember that data analysis is a recursive process and researchers follow where it leads.

Step 5: Write Essay

At this point, you should stop and write a refined research question that you want to address in your essay. Then, you should begin drafting the various sections of your essay. It's sometimes easiest to begin with the Methods or the Findings/Results and move back and forth between various sections. Consult

Mary Soliday's "Translating Self as Difference," Stuart Greene's, "Argument as Conversation," and Lucille McCarthy's "Stranger in a Strange Land."

Your final essay should include the following parts, or make the following moves:

1. **Front matter:** Include a descriptive title, your name, and a 100- to 150-word abstract.
2. **Essay:** There is no precise formula for the form or organization of the essay, since different kinds of materials suggest different kinds of claims, and there are a number of ways to organize your argument effectively. Often the strategies that work best depend on the kind of argument you are making, your purpose for writing, and the documentation style you are following. However, there are a number of elements that are present in most effective essays of this kind.
 - An Introduction section that uses the moves typically found in academic research introductions to create a research space and articulate a "gap" in the research (see Swales). Typically, the opening should establish some common ground with the audience, introduce your subject, and indicate either your argument (thesis) or the direction of your inquiry. Then you should proceed to contextualize your claim, to place it in relation to what others have observed and in any historical context that is appropriate.

Here is one typical organization:

- A brief "literature review" that summarizes what is known about the topic, cites relevant publications, and provides background information about why this research is important. (Your introduction is where you will cite almost all of your sources.)
 - Name a niche, the gap. (What is not yet known?)
 - Explain how you will occupy the niche, how you will close the gap.
 - Include research questions that list the specific questions you are investigating.
 - Include an overview or road map of the essay.
- A Methods section that describes your methodological approach. The main purpose of including this section is to show readers that your study and its results are valid and reliable (and maybe replicable).
 - *Data Collection:* Describe your data collection methods.
 - *Data Analysis:* Explain how you analyzed and coded the data. Include any categories you generated and how you decided on these categories.
 - *Limitations of Study:* Describe drawbacks, flaws, or limitations in the study's methodology (data collection method, sample size, external factors, lack of certain information, etc.).
 - A Results section that describes what you found and includes your analysis of the artifacts. This section is focused on presenting the findings and backing up the findings with the data. Include quotes, excerpts, and evidence. If you are using multimodal content, you'll need to decide how to present this evidence.
 - A Discussion section that summarizes, analyzes, and interprets the results in relation to the research question(s) and previous research, drawing implications, explaining significance and possible consequences, and suggesting areas of future research. Here, you must provide a more in-depth analysis of your findings. In the results section, you are merely reporting your findings, but in the discussion section, you are making sense of the data. What do the results mean? What are the implications of your findings? What, if any, recommendations do you make based on your findings? What is the next step in this research project? Where do we go from here?

- A Conclusion section that briefly reiterates findings, makes interpretations, and suggests areas of future research.

3. **End Matter.**

- a. List of References. Your references list should use MLA documentation style, unless your journal requires a different one.
- b. Endnotes. If you want to include commentary that will aid readers but that is tangential to the paper, you can add an endnote.

PEER REVIEW

We will have a peer review for your Research Essay, but we will conduct it a little differently than we've done before because of the length of this essay. Several days before the in-class session, you will email your draft to your group and me. Your peers will then respond to your drafts outside of class.

For writers: When you email your draft to your group, include a paragraph explaining your audience (the journal and readership), your purpose, what specifically you would like your readers to look for as they respond, and any questions you may have for them.

For peer reviewers: Respond to your peers' drafts by using the peer review form posted in Canvas. When you respond to your peers' drafts, please type up your comments, print them out, and bring them to class. Also, make comments on the draft itself so the writer can have more thorough feedback (you can use Track Changes or handwrite), print out this draft, and bring it to class. Email your comments and the draft with comments to your peer on the day we are reviewing the essays.

FINAL SUBMISSION DETAILS

Comprehensive Reflective Letter

The final reflective letter is a comprehensive reflection on your progress, growth, and learning in this course. In this letter, you should demonstrate to me that you have (a) understood the content of this class and shown progress toward that knowledge; (b) recognized different ways of thinking, creating, expressing, and communicating; (c) grown as a writer/reader/thinker/researcher; and (d) developed a capacity for self-assessment and lifelong learning. This letter should be addressed to me, single-spaced, and between 2-4 pages.

Submission

Print and submit the following to me in a folder or envelope, labeled with your name:

1. Final Reflective Letter.
2. Final, Revised Draft. *This version should be substantially revised from peer review. Please include a note about which journal you targeted.*

Also, upload both documents to Canvas.