

Empowering Student Agency and Connecting Genres with Literacy Narratives and the DALN (Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives)



Two-Year College
English Association
of Mississippi

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Why Literacy Narratives?

- The literacy narrative adds depth and focus to narrative-based assignments.
- Encourages students to reflect meaningfully on particular aspects of their development as a literate person.
- May often give teachers insight into their students' backgrounds and experiences with literacy.
- Sometimes used as a diagnostic tool.

The 'standard' literacy narrative

- Many literacy assignments draw on our [standard concepts of reading and writing](#).
- Many students (and teachers) are familiar with the standard definition of a literacy narrative, such as exploring a particular experience in order to gain insight into who we are as writers and readers and to examine the role literacy plays into our lives.

Part 1

Empowering Student Agency

The 2.0 Literacy Narrative

- Recognizes that students bring/gain experiences from/in multiple forms of literacy.
- What are some forms of literacy besides the alphabetic?
 - Cultural
 - Technical
 - Social
 - Digital

Benefits of the 2.0 model

- Such writing acting as an underlying foundation that fosters students' awareness of the complexities embedded within literacy studies by crafting narratives that engage with their own journeys and experiences.
- Encourages students to view literacy (and the acquisition of such) as more than static, bounded moments, as the sum of continual literacy practices experienced in various ways.

Challenges

- Regardless of the type of literacy narrative chosen as an assignment, a challenge arises in classrooms that include students from underrepresented minorities or from marginalized spaces, whether such spaces are physical (as in geography) or socioeconomic.
- Too often, such students perceive themselves as having no or little literacy, or as having no valid experiences to share with audiences: in effect, their voices are either muted or artificial.

Student Voices

- Our students often come into our classrooms having been stereotyped into deficit models—lacking in agency, lacking in confidence.
- By encouraging students to reflect and compose in focused ways about the experiences of their lives, teachers are giving all students—not just a privileged few—the foundation to recognize and value their own histories.

Recognizing Reification

- Such feelings may stem, in part, from the awareness that their own histories of literacy fall outside mainstream, often reified, narratives that are used as models for what an “excellent” literacy narrative is or does. Thus, they become constrained by the invoked power characteristic of reification, whether of literacy or other abilities.

Turning to the DALN

- One method, among others, that supports the development of these students into agents of their own literacy is to point to existing literacy narratives that situate difficult (Becker, 2014) or dark (Zipin, 2009) knowledge and experiences as among legitimate literacies.
- The DALN has a number of entries in which people from a variety of backgrounds discuss how their often complex and difficult journeys shaped their own literacies.
- In such situations, students can learn to view what they often think of as “outsider” experiences as real and meaningful learning (Alexander, 2011).

The Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives ([DALN](#))

[DALN Home](#)
[Login](#)

Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives



Examples: Mentor Texts

- Literacy narrative of an autistic person
- Fancy Shawl Dancing as a literacy
- My Appalachian Identity
- Football Is My Literacy
- Analysis and Argument
- Geographic Literacy
- FY Writing
- Rhetoric

Part 2

Discovering Genres In the Writing Classroom

Discovering Genres with the DALN

Research

- "Dog Research" by Unknown. Delightful audio describing how one student used research to pitch getting a dog to her parents

<http://hdl.handle.net/2374.DALN/3328>

- "Analysis of Literary Practices" by Briana Murray, Briana briefly describes the "how" of writing a research paper

<http://hdl.handle.net/2374.DALN/3275>

DALN artifacts by genre

Persuasive Writing

- "Michigan No-Fault Automobile Insurance: Experiences with Writing to Three Different Audiences" by Julian Prosser. Julian's description is spot-on: "This narrative is about writing on Michigan's No-Fault Automobile Insurance for three different rhetorical situations"

<http://hdl.handle.net/2374.DALN/1838>

DALN artifacts by genre

Creative Writing, Poetry

- "Transformative Poetry for Victims of Violence" by Emily Johnston. In a video, Emily discusses her "evolution as a creative writer and how eventually this led to work/research on domestic violence narratives"

<http://hdl.handle.net/2374.DALN/2555>

- "The Young Poet" by Jasmine Massey. In this brief video, Jasmine connects poetry, songwriting, and storytelling with learning to write and her classes at UA Little Rock

<http://hdl.handle.net/2374.DALN/1490>

Resources

- <http://daln.osu.edu>
- https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/write/fieldguide/writing_guides.asp
- <http://writingstudies2.blogspot.com/p/literacy-narrative-assignment.html>

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