

A collaborative project with Writing and Rhetoric I and the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN)



### **Literacy Narrative Assignment**

As you know from your research in the DALN, a literacy narrative is a personal story about reading, writing, or composing in any form or context. For the final two assignments of the semester, you will be working with your own literacy narrative, in print and then digital form.

Your print digital literacy narrative will focus on a personal story or experience with literacy or literacies, told in a compelling, detailed way so that your audience both connects to the story and to the meaning you convey about your understanding of the role of literacy/literacies in your life.

This essay will be 3-5 double-spaced, word-processed pages and include at least one reference to ideas about literacy from the published authors we have read in class and at least one reference to the DALN literacy narratives you analyzed in your first essay. By reference, I mean that I hope to see you make and discuss some connection between your experience with and understanding of literacy and some of the other ideas of literacy that we have explored in class.

#### **Step 1 – Generate Ideas**

You can use some of the resources from the DALN to begin thinking about what story (with meaning) you might want to share <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/selfe2/daln/step1.html>

Keep in mind that literacy narratives can be about any experience with literacy and language -- print, digital, oral, or other. They can be happy, funny, or sad. Your story should focus on a powerful memory – a story you can show/tell rather than just a chronology of your literate life.

Here are some additional questions to get you started:

- What has the experience of becoming “literate” been like for you? Can you tell a story about that process—when something really “clicked” or when

something just wasn't working at all? What was helpful? What was not? Does being literate more than one language affect your understanding of language and literacy? How? Why?

- As a student of the arts and/or media, what literacies have shaped your life and your interests? Is there a literacy story that can help us understand how you ended up here at Columbia College Chicago?
- Do you have an “aha” moment about literacy, print or digital, in your life? Do you remember an experience that helped you turn a corner or achieve something, in school or out of school, related to some aspect of literacy or language learning?
- What other questions have surfaced in your literacy work this semester that you could ask yourself?

**Step 2 – Pick a story – Work with a partner and share at least three possible literacy stories that you might want to focus on. As you share, consider these questions:**

- Why were/are the event(s) you recounted meaningful or significant to you *personally*? Why do you like this story? What makes it worth telling?
- How do you understand and interpret the import of the event(s) in terms of what you know about literacy or literacies? What can it tell you about learning and/or communication? Language? Reading? Composing?
- What connections can you find between this literacy narrative and other ideas about literacy you have encountered this semester?

**Step 3 –Draft your Compelling Literacy Narrative**

To successfully write a compelling literacy narrative, a form of personal essay/memoir, you must tell a story. As you create your narrative, you need to be conscious of dramatic and emotional modulation, of purposeful description, and of making sense of your experience through analysis. In other words, your story must be evocative, detailed, develop characters, AND have a “so what,” or a strong sense of purpose.

You have a story and a purpose:

*relate a personal story or experience with literacy, told in a compelling, detailed way so that your audience both connects to the story and to the meaning you convey about your understanding of the role of literacy in your life.*

So now, it's time to write. Use what you have noticed and what we have discussed in class about what works or does not work in sample literacy narratives to guide your writing. As you write, do the following:

- Open your narrative in and interesting and provocative way.

- Structure your story with an arc (is there a struggle or conflict? A moment of change or realization? An achievement? A critical event? An evolving idea?) and provide appropriate details.
- Provide enough detail and character development (you are the main character) to help us, your readers, connect to the story.
- Connect your story and literacy experience in some way to other DALN entries we have reviewed or discussed and to wider theoretical discussions of literacy we have read in the work of published authors this semester.
- Make sure you head towards a “so what” and meaningful commentary/insight on the role of literacy or literacies in your life.
- Cite and document source material as needed in MLA style

#### **Step 4 - Literacy Narrative Evaluation**

As always, the assignment guides my evaluation process. You can use these questions as you review the work of your classmates and revise your own work. In my evaluation, I will first look to see if you have done or attempted to do the following things and then comment on how well you have achieved the following:

1. Open your narrative in an interesting and provocative way?
2. Structure your story with a coherent arc and provide appropriate details?
3. Provide enough detail and character development to help your readers connect to your story?
4. Connect your story and literacy experience to other DALN entries and to wider theoretical discussions of literacy?
5. Develop a meaningful commentary or insight on the role of literacy or literacies in your life?
6. Write with effective and appropriate use of grammar, syntax, word choice, punctuation, and documentation style?