

WHAT ARE THEY?

Literacy narratives are personal essays in which writers share their personal experiences with learning to read and write. Literacy narrative guidelines can vary widely by instructor, but writers may also discuss other types of literacy like music, technology, or math. Writers of literacy narratives have two goals: to convey their experiences and to explain how those experiences shaped their current literacy practices and experiences.

GETTING STARTED

Before you begin to write, read your assignment guidelines carefully. Remember that your literacy narrative is *your* story. It is perfectly acceptable—and necessary—to use first person (*I, my, etc.*).

PREWRITING

Although you do not need to know exactly what you are going to write before you begin drafting your literacy narrative, it will be helpful to spend some time prewriting. Prewriting can help you jump-start the writing process, and it can also help you organize your thoughts and ideas before you begin drafting. If you're having trouble getting started, come to the KSU Writing Center, where a Writing Assistant can help you even at the prewriting stage.

Prewriting exercise 1: Jump-start questions

1. How old were you when you first started learning to read and/or write?
2. What challenges related to reading and/or writing have you faced, and how did you approach them?
3. What is your first or most vivid memory of reading and/or writing?
4. What was your family's attitude toward reading and/or writing?
5. Who taught you to read and/or write?
6. What do you like about reading and/or writing?
7. What do you dislike about reading and/or writing?
8. What literacy-related event at school do you recall as interesting, humorous, or embarrassing?
9. What book or other text has been particularly meaningful to you, and why?
10. What has been your greatest success (or failure) connected to reading and/or writing?
11. What goals do you have as a reader and/or writer?

Prewriting exercise 2: The "five-minute sprint"

Set a timer for five minutes and write without stopping. Follow this one rule: don't stop until the timer rings. You may want to choose one of your responses to the questions listed above as a starting point.

Reflect on your prewriting.

Take some time to reflect on your prewriting. Here are some sentence stems to help:

As I read what I have written,

- I notice _____.
- I remember _____.
- it surprises me that _____.
- it pleases me that _____.
- I find it interesting that _____.
- I wonder _____.

DRAFTING YOUR LITERACY NARRATIVE

Once you have gotten some ideas down on paper (or on your screen), you will need to decide which of your many experiences related to literacy you will include in your narrative. You might choose to order your anecdotes by

- importance: least to most OR most to least important
- complexity: least to most OR most to least complex
- chronology: the order of occurrence

Take time to consider the elements of story.

Theme: The theme is the underlying idea that you are expressing through your story. In the case of a literacy narrative, your theme will be literacy. You will convey your theme through a combination of characters, setting, dialogue, and plot.

Setting: The setting includes the time and geographic location within your narrative. Elements of setting may include culture and geography. Where and when did you learn to read and write, and how did this impact your experience?

Characters: Characters are the individuals who take action in your narrative. Since the literacy narrative is autobiographical, you will be the main character. Who else has played a role in your literacy development?

Plot: The plot is the sequence of events that make up your story. What happened, and how did one event affect another?

Conflict: Conflict is characterized by a struggle between two or more opposing forces. Conflict provides crucial tension that drives the narrative forward. What internal or external struggles have you faced and overcome (or not quite overcome) as you've developed your skills as a reader and writer?

Be descriptive.

Include details and specific examples to capture your readers' interest and convey your experiences accurately.

Experience	Detailed & Specific Description
<i>I read a lot when I was a kid.</i>	<i>From ages five to fifteen, I was obsessed with reading everything I could get my grimy little hands on: magazines, paperback novels, cereal boxes, and anything else that contained text.</i>
<i>My teacher helped me.</i>	<i>My teacher often stayed late to help me learn to read and write challenging words.</i>

REVISING YOUR LITERACY NARRATIVE

After you have written a complete draft, read your literacy narrative out loud to yourself and/or work with a Writing Assistant in the KSU Writing Center to continue to improve your literacy narrative. Make sure you have addressed all of the assignment guidelines. Also check to make sure all of the following apply:

- The essay tells a story about your development of literacy.
- The essay stays on topic.
- The writing is clear and makes sense.
- The essay includes specific, relevant examples from your own life.
- The essay includes details to make the writing vivid.
- The tone and language are appropriate for your audience.
- The essay has an interesting, relevant title.
- The essay has a clear opening paragraph that introduces the narrative.
- The essay has a clear closing paragraph that concludes the narrative.

VISIT WRITINGCENTER.KENNESAW.EDU TO MAKE APPOINTMENTS FOR ONE-ON-ONE ASSISTANCE.
THE KSU WRITING CENTER: NOT BECAUSE YOU CAN'T WRITE ... BUT BECAUSE YOU DO!