

Tips for Your Narrative Essay

Organization

Remember that the narrative essay that you will write for this assignment—an essay based on your personal knowledge and experience—is different from academic essays that students normally write in high school and college.

Instead of having a traditional introduction and body (i.e. thesis support), a narrative essay tells a story that is organized around a central issue, with a point, message or thesis emerging at the end.

Show - Don't Tell: See the Movie in Your Essay

The subject of the essay is you, the writer – specifically, an issue that you have dealt with.

However, remember that you are writing the essay for readers (not for yourself); the key to making the essay interesting to readers is to involve them in the details of the issue as you experienced it – in other words, *show - don't tell*.

One way to make sure that you are on the right track is to think visually about the essay. Visualize the essay as a movie. Narrative essays are “story-based,” just as most movies are. If you cannot visualize the essay, it may mean that the issue is too large or abstract for a good narrative essay.

Try this “storyboarding” exercise: Think of your essay in terms of key scenes or incidents (no more than four or five) that you will re-create, with dialogue and description, to take the reader into the reality of the issue.

For example, the student essay titled “Masks” in your textbook (see page 187) could be “storyboarded” like this:

Scene One. Kindergarten painting class, admiring the other girl’s blonde pigtails, her self-confidence and “sophistication.”

Scene Two. Seventh grade lockers. Admiring her trendy clothes and her freedom (already “going out with guys”).

Scene Three. High School. Friendly conversation in the library.

Scene Four (conclusion/climax). The next day. Snubbed in the high school hallway. The writer has an “epiphany” or insight, and delivers a message to readers.

Try storyboarding your own narrative by visualizing key scenes and jotting down brief details in the boxes below:

ESSAY MOVIE SCENES

<p><u>Scene One</u></p>	<p><u>Scene Two</u></p>
<p><u>Scene Three</u></p>	<p><u>Scene Four (etc.)</u></p>