

Major Paper 1.5: Literacy Narrative

gis 140 / sec. A / early fall quarter 2007-08 / chang



In the past week, you have thought about, written about, and talked about literacy. By now you have discovered that defining literacy, claiming literacy, critiquing literacy is challenging work. Even the best writers and scholars and students alike have struggled to express and represent literacy in ways that are engaging, persuasive, theoretical, and useful. Your task at hand is to identify your own relationship to literacy, to articulate your own definition of what it means to be a literate person, and to write your own literacy narrative—again, your own story of literacy.

Goals and Outcomes

For this assignment, you will identify a specific experience in your literacy, how you learned to read and write, and your path to thinking critically about the world around you. More specifically, you will write a literacy narrative that explores your definition of literacy, that explores the ways in which your experiences with reading and writing—both positive or difficult—have shaped you and your relationship with learning, with other people or groups, both in and outside of academia.

Consider the questions raised by Short Paper 1.1: What is Literacy? Use the questions on the assignment sheet as a jumping off point. Draw on the week's workshops and discussions and readings as well. Consider how writers like Douglass or Alexie or Tan or Anzaldúa imagined and developed their narratives. Use Short Papers 1.2 and 1.3 for further quotes, snippets, ideas, and details. You should not simply tell a story but **reflect critically** on your experiences and **locate them in a larger conversation** about what "literacy" means. To make progress as a reader and writer, it is important to think about how you've gotten to where you are now. At the end of the quarter, you'll write a prospective essay that looks at the reading and writing practices you'll take with you as you begin college and discusses the changes you'll try to make as a college writer. The literacy narrative, then, is the first stage of this end goal.

Your paper should effectively define literacy (integrate narrative with critical reflection), fully develop ideas, support those ideas with detail, quote from the readings if necessary, engage with the question of what literacy means (personally as well as in the larger conversation about literacy), and attempt to argue, challenge, support, or modify a definition of literacy (which requires attention to different viewpoints on literacy). Your paper should demonstrate a clear outline and organization, clear and engaging narrative, well-developed paragraphs, and an attention to your audience.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Audience: At base, you are writing for an audience that includes a general academic community, which includes your instructor, your classmates, and the authors of the essays we have read. You should imagine a larger, more inclusive audience. Keep in mind that your audience is varied in many ways, including academic experience and familiarity with the texts, so you'll need to consider of what information each type of reader will need to make sense of your essay. Another good way to think about your audience is to imagine the publication in which your essay could appear such as the *UW Daily*, the *e.g.* website, or a scholarly journal.

Format: This assignment is a formal, academic paper and should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the course policies (see the course website for an example of a major paper's formatting):

formal title page, appropriate title for your paper

3-4 pages, typed, double-spaced, with MLA citations (if needed), stapled

bibliography, correct MLA format (if needed)

Grading Rubric & Expectations:

Sequence: Short Paper 1.1
Short Paper 1.2
Short Paper 1.3
Literacy Narrative Draft 1.4

Due: Monday, August 27