

Narrative Essay: The Evolution of an Idea

An Essay Progression

ESSAY PROMPT

In the next few weeks, we will empower ourselves to write personal narratives about how we think, learn, and communicate in the world around us. In our readings, our written Practice assignments, and our class discussions, we will practice making assertions, providing anecdotal and textual evidence, explaining evidence, and connecting paragraphs to a global statement.

Explore one of the following questions in essay form. The options are flexible by design, and I encourage you to write about topics that you care about. Throughout the essay progression, you may change your option and topic.

- **OPTION 1.** Narrate a time when you changed your mind about a specific opinion, decision, plan, or idea. As a way to begin writing, consider whether you can build a paragraph around any of the following questions; these questions may help you brainstorm, but you do not have to answer them all.
 - What was your initial opinion (or decision, plan, idea)?
 - What new information, experience, discussion, argument, event, question, misunderstanding, or discomfort led you to reevaluate your initial opinion? Was this process abrupt or prolonged?
 - What motivated you to seriously question your initial opinion, rather than disregarding any doubts about that opinion? What were the stakes, if any, of changing your opinion?
 - What was your final opinion?
 - Were there ways you could test whether your initial opinion or final opinion was better?
 - How final is your opinion? That is, what issues or questions remain unresolved? How certain are you that your opinion won't change again?

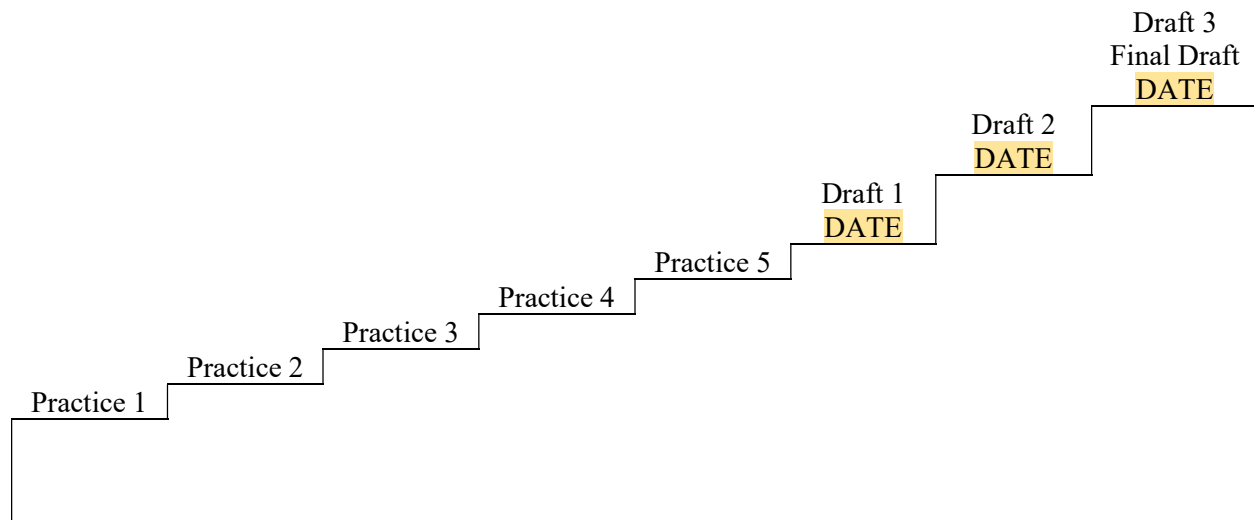
- **OPTION 2.** Narrate how new information or new questions had complicated your understanding of a specific idea. You may use an idea that we have discussed or will discuss in this course—but you do not have to! You can even use an idea that you are currently exploring. As a way to begin writing, consider whether you can build a paragraph around any of the following questions; these questions may help you brainstorm, but you do not have to answer them all.
 - What was your initial understanding of the idea?
 - How was your understanding similar to or different from how others seemed to understand the idea?
 - What new information, experience, discussion, argument, event, question, misunderstanding, or discomfort complicated your understanding? Was this process abrupt or prolonged?
 - What motivated you to really explore this idea further? What were the stakes, if any, of refining your understanding of this idea?
 - How is your current understanding of the idea different from how you used to understand the idea?
 - What issues or questions, if any, remain unresolved? Are these issues relatively minor, or do you suspect that they could lead to an even more complex understanding of the idea?
 - What are the first steps toward addressing any of the remaining issues?

- OPTION 3. What is the relationship between your life and the practice of writing? As a way to begin writing, return to what you wrote for Writing Sample 1. Consider some of the following questions; these questions may help you brainstorm, but you do not have to answer them all. The relationship you describe does not have to be entirely positive, entirely negative, or somewhere within that spectrum per se.
 - Recall a moment when you felt confident about your writing.
 - Recall a moment when you felt discouraged about your writing.
 - What kinds of writing have you been asked to write?
 - What kinds of writing do you do even when you're not asked to?
 - To what extent does your writing vary among different contexts?
 - Academic, professional, personal, ...
 - Writing for different classes, on social media, for different people, ...
 - What kinds of writing, if any, have you shared with friends or with peers?
 - How have these experiences affected your approach or attitudes toward writing?
 - Would you call yourself a writer? Why or why not?
 - What challenges, questions, or uncertainties do you encounter during the writing process?
 - Based on your previous experience, what next steps could you take in order to improve your writing skills?

Write for someone who knows little to nothing about your topic and personal experience. Include a brief introduction, a global statement that directly addresses the question, body paragraphs in APEC structure, a brief conclusion, and a title. For this essay, you may use personal experience and anecdotes as the main evidence for your assertions and global statement. You can also include and cite textual evidence as needed. Include a word count at the end of each Draft. For Draft 1, submit 850-1250 words (approximately 3-5 pages before Works Cited), which you will revise for Draft 2 and Draft 3. Write in any varieties of English that you are familiar with.

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OVERVIEW

For the Narrative Essay, we will use the concepts of assertion, evidence, analysis, and global statement to read and write personal narratives. You will develop your writing step by step, through a progression of practice assignments and drafts, leading to a final draft of 850-1250 words (approximately 3-5 pages) in any varieties of English that you choose.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF A PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT?

Each Practice is a take-home writing assignment that builds toward and can be used to construct Draft 1. For example, Practice 1 asks you to write a few sentences that closely read a specific text, while Practice 5 asks you to expand your previous assignments into a few paragraphs. In this way, the Practice assignments are neither whole drafts nor isolated assignments. They begin a guided path through the writing process. Instead of simply telling you to submit a Narrative Essay one month from now, I've broken down the writing process into smaller actionable steps so that you can exchange feedback with me and with your peers along the way.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF A DRAFT?

Each Draft is a writing assignment in which you make a full attempt at the essay. However, a single attempt will rarely be enough to create a strong piece of writing. The writing process, put simply, is an ongoing cycle of three modes: Generating New Writing, Revising, and Editing. Especially in the first two modes, you practice strategies for creativity, critical thinking, reading, writing, and discussing. A single Draft would provide you with a platform to engage intensely with these strategies. But each subsequent Draft offers you space to get some strategic distance from what you've written, workshop your draft with real readers, approach your ideas and writing with a fresh perspective, and then make major changes. From one Draft to the next, your goal is to continue generating new writing and to revise at least one-third of what you had written. In this sense, revision is *re-envisioning* what you had first submitted. As you approach the final Draft, you can then dramatically shift your focus from generating new writing and revising to editing.

To help you jumpstart revision and editing, I provide feedback as outlined below, I reserve office hours to discuss with you individually and in small groups, and I coordinate peer reviews for you to exchange feedback with peers, who themselves are in the middle of the writing process.

HOW TO SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS

- Type and print all assignments in Times New Roman, 12pt black font, 2.0 spaced with 1” margins on 8.5”x11” white paper, double-sided if possible, stapled. Prepare in-line citations and Works Cited in MLA format for each assignment. Include your name and the assignment title.
- Consult the Course Schedule for related readings and due dates. Submit all writing assignments by the beginning of class—in person or in my mailbox. For each day (rounded up) that an assignment is late, the grade will be reduced by 20% of the maximum possible grade. Computer, printer, or file errors will not excuse lateness; back up, store, or synchronize your files with free cloud programs like Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, Box, or Amazon Drive.
- If you are absent, you are responsible for (i) emailing relevant assignments by the start of class and (ii) submitting printed copies by the next class in person or in my mailbox. Otherwise, the assignment is late. To catch up on what you missed in class, (iii) consult the Course Schedule and visit me during office hours.

FEEDBACK

- PRACTICE 1 – DRAFT 2. I will grade your writing based on completion, according to Rubric A.

RUBRIC A

Work	Complete the task and practice specific writing strategies as defined by the prompt and syllabus		
Grade	0	√-	√, √+
Credit	0	50%	100%
Feedback	Suggestions for next steps, questions, or resources as needed		

- DRAFT 1. You will use a guided worksheet to do a peer review, during which you will focus on generating new writing and brainstorming major revisions.
- DRAFT 2. Similarly, you will use a guided worksheet to do a peer review. However, for this peer review, you will focus on minor revisions, editing, and final polishing.
- DRAFT 3 (FINAL DRAFT). I will grade your writing according to Rubric B (attached). If I do not receive Draft 3 within the lateness window, I will treat Draft 1 or Draft 2, if submitted, as Draft 3.
- MINI PORTFOLIO (OPTIONAL). For extra credit, you can submit a “mini-portfolio” by email. For our class, the mini-portfolio is a single Word, PDF, or similar file that contains all assignments that you did for the essay progression. Label and put the assignments in order, including the final draft. I will grade your progress based on completion, according to Rubric A.
- DRAFT 4 (OPTIONAL). Near the end of the semester, you may submit Draft 4 for one essay progression of your choice. You must attach any feedback that you had received on Draft 3, and you must attach a three-paragraph reflection that guides me through how you revised and edited the paper. Between Draft 3 and Draft 4, lateness and length penalties will carry over, and the higher grade will entirely replace the lower grade. Requirements for Draft 4 will be finalized and announced later in the semester.

RUBRIC B FOR FINAL DRAFTS

		Points	Earned
Task Fulfillment	Completes the task and practices specific strategies as defined by the prompt and syllabus	10	
Global Statement	Communicates an explicit global statement that is effective for the given context	10	
	Communicates how each paragraph connects or contributes to the global statement	10	
Paragraph Structure	Demonstrates familiarity with the APEC paragraph structure, accomplishing the following in a minimum of 3 paragraphs:	10	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assert • Provide evidence to support assertions • Explain the evidence 	10	
	Adapts the APEC paragraph structure as needed	10	
Introduction	Orients the reader in paragraph form	10	
Conclusion	Concludes the paper in paragraph form	5	
Written English	Communicates comprehensibly using the conventions of various written English(es), including citation in MLA format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation	15	
Source Integration	Uses sentence-level strategies to explicitly identify, contextualize, and represent sources for the reader	5	
Works Cited	Identifies sources in a Works Cited in MLA format	5	

Academic Integrity	Completes assignment in accordance with expectations of academic integrity defined by syllabus and Bulletin	Grade OR Grade = 0
Length	Meets minimum length defined by syllabus and prompt	Grade * % Length
Time	Submitted to instructor in class on or before due date	Grade – 20*(Days Late)
Portfolio	Submitted to instructor in class with complete portfolio	+1% Course Grade

Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback will be given as needed either on rubric, draft, comment letter, or meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for next steps, questions, or resources • Maximum of three comments per page, prioritizing major trends. When writing feedback, my goal is not to be your proofreader or ghostwriter, but to help you identify specific next steps as you continue revising. • Review and consider feedback for 48 hours before contacting the instructor • When contacting instructor about feedback, brainstorm 3-5 questions beforehand
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PRACTICE 1

Print, read, and annotate *Introduction to Academic Essays: APEC Paragraph Structure* (Borja, p. 3-11). Though we are not necessarily writing in academic English(es) in this course, this reading briefly introduces the concepts of assertion and evidence, which each of us uses in all kinds of communication every day.

Print, read, and annotate “Mother Tongue: All the Englishes I Grew Up With” by Amy Tan. Respond to the following question with at least one paragraph. In each paragraph, make an assertion, provide some textual evidence in direct quotations, and explain your evidence as needed. Create in-line citations and a Works Cited in MLA format for every assignment in this course; refer to the quick tips at the bottom of the page.

- Describe a specific moment in the text that surprised, interested, fascinated, amused, bothered, or confused you.

TIPS FOR IN-LINE CITATIONS! In the following examples, the author’s last name is Tan, and the quote comes from page 1 of the text.

- She states, “This is a quotation” (Tan 1).
- In the opening paragraph of “Mother Tongue,” Amy Tan says, “This is a quotation” (1).

TIPS FOR THE WORKS CITED! You will be assigned formal reading about Works Cited soon. Until then, and as you get started, I will offer you some guidance. Creating a Works Cited citation might seem strange, intimidating, or frustrating. However, the citation in MLA format is fairly straightforward for books with one author, for smaller texts contained within larger texts, and for websites.

- Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Publication Date.
- Last Name, First Name. “Title.” *Title of Container*, Publication Date, URL. Accessed Date.
- At the very end of the assignment, include the Works Cited citation shown below. It doesn’t need to be a separate page.

Works Cited

Tan, Amy. “Mother Tongue.” *The Threepenny Review*, 1990, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4383908>. Accessed 2 Apr 2020.

PRACTICE 2

Print, read, and annotate *Introduction to Academic Essays: APEC Paragraph Structure* (Borja, p. 12-13). Though we are not necessarily writing in academic English(es) in this course, this reading briefly expands on the concept of evidence, which each of us uses in all kinds of communication every day.

Print, read, and annotate “‘La double vie de Veronica’: Reflections on My Life as a Chinese Migrant in Australia” by Veronica Zhengdao Ye. Respond to the following question with at least one paragraph. In each paragraph, make an assertion, provide some textual evidence in direct quotations, and explain your evidence as needed. Create in-line citations and a Works Cited in MLA format for every assignment in this course; refer to the quick tips at the bottom of the page.

- Describe a specific moment in the text that surprised, interested, fascinated, amused, bothered, or confused you.

TIPS FOR THE WORKS CITED! Briefly review the quick tips in Practice 1. At the very end of the assignment, include the Works Cited citation below. It doesn't need to be a separate page.

Works Cited

Ye, Veronica Zhengdao. “‘La double vie de Veronica’: Reflections on My Life as a Chinese Migrant in Australia.” *Mots Pluriels*, 23 March 2003, motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP2303vzy.html. Accessed 2 Apr 2020.

PRACTICE 3

Print, read, and annotate *Introduction to Academic Essays: APEC Paragraph Structure* (Borja, p. 14-18). Though we are not necessarily writing in academic English(es) in this course, this reading briefly introduces the concept of global statement, which each of us uses in all kinds of communication.

Annotate Brent Staples's essay, "Just Walk On By":

- Number each paragraph so that we can refer to them more easily in class.
- As you read the essay, briefly write down your first reactions in the margin.
- Write down the global statement of the essay—in Brent Staples's words or in your own words. The global statement is his thesis, main argument, or goal for writing the essay.
- Next to each paragraph, write a few keywords that answer the following question: How does this paragraph, in some small or big way, relate to the global statement?
- Submit your annotated text

In this Practice assignment, you will start thinking about your own narrative essay. Read the requirements and options for Draft 1 of your upcoming essay. Throughout the semester, we are practicing how to work with various kinds of evidence, especially textual evidence. For this essay, you are invited to use textual evidence, but notice that most or all of your evidence can be your own personal experience.

- Choose one of the options. Start brainstorming. In other words, start writing down some ideas, thoughts, questions, uncertainties, anecdotes, or descriptions of your personal experience. You can do this on a word processor or with pen and paper. If you would like, you can include lists, keywords, direct quotes, diagrams, drawings, photos, complete sentences, paragraphs, etc.
- Submit all your brainstorming and at least one paragraph. Make sure you have a copy or photo of what you submit, so you can continue working on it for Practice 4.
- On the course schedule, review the requirements and due dates for Practice 4, Practice 5, and Draft 1.

TIPS FOR NARRATIVE ESSAYS! In class, we will discuss and share tips for using personal experience as evidence. Moreover, real student examples from previous semesters are available to you in the *Introduction to Academic Essays: APEC Paragraph Structure*.

TIPS FOR THE WORKS CITED! At the very end of the assignment, include the Works Cited citation below, if needed. It doesn't need to be a separate page.

Works Cited

Staples, Brent. "Just Walk On By: Black Men and Public Space." *Brooklyn College LibGuides Open Educational Resources*, 2018, libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/ld.php?content_id=43558154. Accessed 2 Apr 2020.

PRACTICE 4

Print, read, and annotate *Introduction to Academic Essays: APEC Paragraph Structure* (Borja, p. 23-28). Though we are not necessarily writing in academic English(es) in this course, this reading shows many different strategies for organizing multiple pieces of evidence in a paragraph. You can experiment with these strategies in all kinds of written and spoken communication.

Print read and annotate “Leave Your Name at the Border” by Manuel Muñoz. Respond to the following question with at least one paragraph. In each paragraph, make an assertion, provide some textual evidence in direct quotations, and explain your evidence as needed. In particular, practice the A (PE) (PE) C paragraph structure.

- In terms of the content or the structure of each essay, what is one similarity that you notice between Brent Staples’s “Just Walk On By” and Manuel Muñoz’s “Leave Your Name at the Border”? Notice that both PE will be textual.

In this Practice assignment, you will continue thinking about your own narrative essay. Review the requirements and options for Draft 1 of your upcoming essay. For this essay, recall that most or all of your evidence can be your own personal experience.

- For one of the essay options, start or continue brainstorming. In other words, continue to write down ideas, thoughts, questions, uncertainties, anecdotes, or descriptions of your personal experience. You can do this on a word processor or with pen and paper. If you would like, you can include lists, keywords, direct quotes, diagrams, drawings, photos, complete sentences, paragraphs, etc.
- Submit all your brainstorming and at least one new paragraph. Make sure you have a copy or photo of what you submit, so you can continue working on it for Practice 5. On the course schedule, review the requirements and due dates for Practice 5 and Draft 1.

MORE TIPS FOR IN-LINE CITATIONS! Many websites publish texts online without page numbers. To make an in-line citation for such a source, include only the author’s last name in parentheses (Einstein). If paragraph numbers are marked on the source, include them in the parentheses (Einstein, par. 17)

MORE TIPS FOR THE WORKS CITED! Insider’s Tip: The Purdue OWL website concisely shows the general template for any MLA Works Cited citation. Like me, you may have googled and found the Manuel Muñoz essay on the *New York Times* website. To double check how to cite any text, I google terms such as, “owl cite new york times”. You could also google something like “owl mla online newspaper” or “owl cite page on website”. At the very end of the assignment, include the Works Cited citation below, in alphabetical order by last name. This will be the final Works Cited that I do for you as an example. I believe in you!

Works Cited

Muñoz, Manuel. “Leave Your Name at the Border.” *The New York Times*, 1 August 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/opinion/01munoz.html?smid=pl-share>. Accessed 2 Apr 2020.

Staples, Brent. “Just Walk On By: Black Men and Public Space.” *Brooklyn College LibGuides Open Educational Resources*, 2018, libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/ld.php?content_id=43558154. Accessed 2 Apr 2020.

PRACTICE 5

In this Practice assignment, you will continue writing your own narrative essay. Review the requirements and options for Draft 1 of your upcoming essay. For this essay, recall that most or all of your evidence can be your own personal experience. You are welcome to quote and cite other texts, including the ones we have read together as a class so far.

- Start working on Draft 1. For one of the essay options, submit at least three revised/new paragraphs and a draft of your global statement. When you print your paragraphs, use a pen or pencil to identify each assertion, evidence, and explanation. You can simply write the letters *A*, *P*, and *E* next to the relevant sentences.
- Continue brainstorming. Submit a list of additional assertions or evidence that could possibly become new paragraphs between now and Draft 1.
- Make sure you have a copy or photo of what you submit, so you can continue working on it for Draft 1. On the course schedule, review the due date for Draft 1.

DRAFT 1

Review the Narrative Essay prompt and rubric. Submit a draft of 850-1250 words (approximately 3-5 pages before Works Cited), which you will revise for Draft 2 and Draft 3. Print two copies of your draft. Bring a copy of the peer-review sheets to class.

DRAFT 1 PEER REVIEW – FEEDBACK

Give this page to your peer

Draft written by _____

Feedback from _____

1. Put your pen or pencil down. Read the entire essay once without writing anything.
2. Go through the essay a second time. Annotate along the way with observations and questions.
3. Answer the following questions, keeping in mind what we have practiced so far with global statements, the APEC paragraph structure, citations, and other writing strategies.
 - Put a star next to what appears to be the writer’s global statement
 - What are two strengths about this draft?
Identify specific examples to support your assessment

 - In your opinion, how could the writer improve the draft?
Identify specific moments in the draft where the writer could begin revising
Could any of the strengths above be applied elsewhere in the draft?

 - Identify at least one idea, topic, assertion, evidence, description, or question that captured your attention while reading the draft?

 - What comes to mind when you read this draft? For example: related ideas, related topics, issues in the world around you, other texts, new questions?
4. Discuss your feedback with the writer
5. Return this peer review to the writer

DRAFT 1 PEER REVIEW – YOUR NEXT STEPS

Your name _____

1. Share feedback with your peer
2. Ask questions to clarify their feedback or to get more specific feedback
3. Describe to your peer what challenges you had encountered when writing this draft
Brainstorm some possible solutions with your peer
4. Prioritize. What are your next steps for revising your draft?

DRAFT 2

1. Review your peer feedback and reflection
2. Review the Narrative Essay options, requirements, and rubric
3. Generate new writing
Make major revisions
4. Print two copies of your draft. On the copy that you submit to me, circle or mark all the parts of Draft 2 that differ from Draft 1.

DRAFT 2 PEER REVIEW – FEEDBACK

Give this page to your peer

Draft written by _____

Feedback from _____

1. Ask your peer what revisions they have made since Draft 1 and what they would like to work on
2. Put your pen or pencil down. Read the entire essay once without writing anything
3. Go through the essay a second time. Annotate along the way with observations and questions.
4. Answer the following questions, keeping in mind what we have practiced so far with global statements, the APEC paragraph structure, citations, and other writing strategies.
 - Put a star next to what appears to be the writer’s global statement
 - What are two strengths about this draft?
Identify specific examples to support your assessment

 - In your opinion, how could the writer improve the draft?
Identify specific moments in the draft where the writer could begin revising
Could any of the strengths above be applied elsewhere in the draft?

 - Identify at least one idea, topic, assertion, evidence, description, or question that captured your attention while reading the draft?

 - What comes to mind when you read this draft? For example: related ideas, related topics, conversations you’ve had with other people, issues in the world around you, other texts, new questions?
5. Discuss your feedback with the writer
6. Return this peer review to the writer

DRAFT 2 PEER REVIEW – YOUR NEXT STEPS

Your name _____

1. Share feedback with your peer
2. Ask questions to clarify their feedback or to get more specific feedback
3. Describe to your peer what challenges you had encountered when writing this draft
Brainstorm some possible solutions with your peer
4. Prioritize. What are your next steps for revising your draft?

DRAFT 3

1. Review your peer feedback and reflection
 2. Review the Narrative Essay options, requirements, and rubric
 3. Generate new writing as needed
Make any remaining major revisions
 4. Edit your draft with attention to grammar, spelling, punctuation, and citation format
 5. Submit your complete Narrative Essay, 850-1250 words (about 3-5 pages before Works Cited), both by email and in print.
- **MINI PORTFOLIO (OPTIONAL).** For extra credit, you can submit a “mini-portfolio” by email. For our class, the mini-portfolio is a single Word, PDF, or similar file that contains all assignments that you did for the essay progression. Label and put the assignments in order, including the final draft. I will grade your progress based on completion, according to Rubric A.