

Writing an Effective Narrative Essay

Most college students know that a synonym for “narrative” is “story,” so when they are assigned to write a narrative essay in one of their composition classes, they might think all they have to do is relate any incident—story—from their lives and they will have successfully fulfilled the assignment.

However, there is much more involved in writing a narrative essay. For one thing, it must “conform to the conventions of storytelling: character, plot, setting, climax, and ending” (How, 2006, p. 1). Also, it must be tightly-focused; it cannot just ramble from one point to another (How, 2006, p. 1). Writers must use critical thinking to decide what to include in the story.

There is also a second area to consider when writing a narrative essay: the overall concept. “As a narrator, you are under a[n]...obligation to make your narration meaningful, to give it some central theme or topic that justifies its reading” (McCuen and Winkler, 2006, p. 166). It is not enough just to tell a great story; the story has to have a larger theme that the reader can relate to.

So as students begin the process of picking a good narrative topic, they should select one that lends itself to good story-telling. Then they should be sure that topic suggests larger issue: a theme that engages the reader. Once these two criteria have been met, the writer can move confidently forward.

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References

How to write a narrative essay. (2006). College Essay Net. Retrieved December 4, 2007
from www.college-essay.net

McCuen, J.R., & Winkler, A. C. (2006). *From idea to essay: A rhetoric, reader, and
handbook*. New York: Pearson-Longman.

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