

Becoming the Storyteller

COM102 Major Assignment

The time has come for the first major writing assignment for this course. In some ways, you've already begun this assignment. I say this because we will be working with the literary anecdotes you've created as a starting point for this paper. Specifically, we will be turning the literary anecdote into a longer piece—a story. There's a catch, though. You won't be turning your own anecdote into a full story; you will be revising one of your peers' anecdotes into a story. This will make for interesting and fun opportunity for creativity and dialogue. Keep reading for the specifics.

What's The Task?

Follow these steps:

1. Exchange your personal literary anecdote with one of your classmates—perhaps someone from a group you've been working with lately in class.
2. Take your classmate's anecdote and revise it into a full-length story (at least 3 full pages). Remember that a story can be fictional, so feel free to be creative and make stuff up. There can, in fact, be more “truth” to fiction if done well. Also, keep in mind the criteria set forth in Paley's “A Conversation with My Father” from your *Text Book* (24). Here are a few of the criteria mentioned, but use the story as a guide.
 - a simple story...just recognizable people, and then write down what happened next...a plain story
 - don't leave important facts out
 - truth first! recognize it when you see it. don't hide from it.
(note that this reference to truth does not mean that the story need be factual; actually, fiction will work better in this project)
3. Remember, that the short story differs from the anecdote (besides being longer) in that it often requires the reader to interpret the meaning of the story, whereas the anecdote is more likely to spell out the meaning of events. As you write, remember Labov's six narrative elements. Be deliberate in your use of these—what you include, what you omit, the order of the elements. (In other words, be conscious of the structure of your story.) Be thinking about the effect each of your choices will have on the reader.
4. When you have completed your draft of the story, write at least one paragraph at the end in which you discuss the changes you made to the original anecdote and why you made them. Include a brief discussion about how you used Labov's narrative elements. Don't forget to do this last step! It's important.



What's the Point?

The point of this assignment is for you gain a better understanding of literary narratives and their structure by working to create one. In this creative task, you will be challenged to apply your understanding of Labov's six narrative elements as well as to demonstrate your idea of “what makes a good story.” Furthermore, your attempt here to represent and render human experience through your “good story” will provide opportunities for future discussions.

How will this assignment be assessed?

First of all, remember that this assignment will not be fully assessed until you submit it as a part of your final portfolio project; however, as one of at least two initial drafts, it will receive a “formative grade”. Refer to the evaluation criteria on the syllabus for an explanation and rubric for formative grades (and letter grades).

Beyond the general rubric found on the syllabus for all work in this course, this assignment has some specific considerations. It might help you to understand how I approach grading. I start reading each paper I receive from you with the assumption that it will be C quality work (average, acceptable work). As I read, if it goes beyond the minimum of that which is average and acceptable and if I am pleasantly surprised by the work, it will likely move into the B and A range. If a work falls short of my basic expectations for average, acceptable work, it may fall to a D or F.

The basic expectations that I have for average and acceptable work for this project are as follows:

- 3 to 5 pages in length; fiction or fact, but not fantasy; it should feel “true-to-life”
- fully developed story with a good use of strong specific details, so that it rings “true,” so that the reader can “see” the story in his or her mind's eye, and so the reader understands and connects on some level with the characters and events
- effective use of strong active verbs to carry the story forward
- story based on original anecdote but with significant revision/extension/development of the anecdote so that it is indeed a full story; interesting opener and a resonating close
- apparent and creative use of Labov's narrative elements to make the story “literary”
- apparent awareness and selective use of the criteria introduced in Paley's “A Conversation with My Father”
- proofread and free from careless mechanical errors

When's it due?

See your course syllabus for a complete schedule of due dates, including due dates for drafts.