

Language & Literacy Narrative Brainstorms Worksheet

Your name:

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Instructions: Please respond to the questions that follow with as much detail and description that you can. The more you put into reflecting now on the complexities of your language and literacy development, the better off you'll be in completing our major assignment for our first phase of this course. Take as much space as you need.

When it comes to your experiences with language (speaking and listening) and literacy (reading and writing), what specific moments in your life can you recall that are particularly vivid or that emerge as being significant to you? Yes, it could be an example from your earliest memories of *learning* to speak, read, and write (in school or elsewhere), but it doesn't have to be. It could be a memorable encounter—a moment of tension, confusion, or triumph. It could be about experiences developing additional dialects/languages and advanced literacies (i.e., learning to speak/write in different peer groups, at school, at work, with family, online, in different locations across the nation or world, etc. Please select 3 moments to describe. Then, explain why each is interesting or significant.

1. I suppose one such moment which was of significance to me was when I was selected to be the valedictorian for my fifth grade class. Obviously there is the academic aspect which accompanies that, but for me, that came rather easily, because I had never really had any major struggles with academic performance up until that point. But one of the moments which I can recall being significant was being forced to formulate a speech which I would read in front of a large crowd of people, which was something I had never done up until then. This was therefore one of my earliest encounters with public speaking. In that sense, I find this moment to be interesting or significant because it laid the groundwork for me to be more comfortable speaking to groups of people, and kind of forced me to expand my skill set to some extent because especially then, I was always considered to be shy compared to my peers.

2. Another experience with language I would consider to be notable is actually not really a singular moment, but rather a set of experiences throughout my AP Spanish course in high school. My parents are both Dominican immigrants and as such, I always had a decent understanding of the Spanish language, but up until that class, I was never truly forced to develop my skills in that language, and I wasn't really pressured to try. As such, being in a position where I had to respond to prompts in Spanish, and simulate conversation in another language, caused me to hone and develop my ability to speak in another language and be able to

understand and hold conversations in that language. Being that it was in an academic setting as well, I felt as though there was more of an external drive to better myself as well, which also helped.

3. For this third example, I wanted to select something that represents my experiences with reading and writing more than listening and speaking. However, from my experience, I don't have a single standout moment which was truly significant or vivid. However, when looking into how to approach this question, I went through my computer and looked at some of my old writing assignments from throughout middle school and high school. In doing so, I found comments from my teachers at the time, and that caused me to think a little. I feel like the combination of various moments throughout my academic career, whenever my teachers would comment on my work and tell me how to improve it, helped shape me in a sense. I consider these to be memorable or significant because they remind me that we are ultimately the product of those with which we surround ourselves, and having a litany of resources at your disposal ready to give you advice on how to do better, in whatever aspect, is always necessary. As such, I feel like receiving these comments, whether they're just commenting on my good work or telling me what to do differently, definitely shaped my writing and reading skills.

What specific materials or artifacts (i.e., objects, writing, learning materials, pictures, video recordings, etc.) from your past can you locate/recall and that in some way represent a meaningful moment in your reading/writing development? This can be something like a journal or book, but also anything at all (e.g., a toy, piece of furniture, cereal box, art supplies, etc.) What memories and feelings can you extract from these examples you've gathered/recalled? Explain.

Some things from my past that I would say represent a meaningful moment in my reading and writing development include some of the essays which I wrote in my various classes, including US History, which I took in ninth grade. Some of the memories I can recall include sitting there in my US History class almost four years ago, eagerly learning new information about history, which was a topic that interested me greatly. I also recall the evenings I would spend revising and working on my essays, making sure to submit them before the 11:59 deadline. Looking back on these moments, I recall them with fondness, and sometimes I find myself yearning to return to the simplicity which I had taken for granted. Obviously I am older now, and it is during these moments that I feel you truly appreciate the past and the moments which you maybe didn't appreciate fully at the time. I can say for certain that my ninth grade self probably did not believe I would feel nostalgia for those days, yet here we are.

For better or worse, who and what impacted how, when, and why you developed your languages and literacies? Who in your family, at school, among your peer group, or in your community played a part? How did your particular situation or experience shape your literacy? That is, what sorts of issues, experiences, organizations, or life circumstances played a part? What kinds of languages and literacies did you gain from those people and your particular situation? How? Why? Explain.

I feel as though watching my parents growing up played a role in developing my languages and literacies. For one, I feel as though we tend to absorb our parents' ideals growing up, and as such, I feel like I absorbed some of their values pertaining to education and the importance it had. Furthermore, they always communicated a certain way, and they were typically always very friendly and amicable with others, but I also remember my dad in particular is always sitting down, whether it be on the phone or face to face with somebody, talking about pertinent issues, such as family related ones. As such, I feel as though I developed an appreciation for communication and interpersonal skills as a kid. Even when I was younger up until today, my dad and I would always and still always are talking about different things, whether it be politics or cars or life or what have you, and I feel like these types of one on one conversations gave me a deeper appreciation for situational literacy and drawing comparisons between the different things you encounter in life.

Another thing I suppose I gained from my parents is understanding Spanish, seeing as they are both immigrants and they speak Spanish a lot, especially with friends and family. I definitely appreciate this, as being able to communicate and develop skills in another language can only benefit you.

In what ways do you see your language, reading, and writing capabilities as having social consequences or impacting your life circumstances—that is, what advantages did/do you have and what disadvantages did/do you face as a result of your language and literacy learning?

I feel as though my language, reading and writing capabilities can be beneficial in some ways. I say this because when you have a decent understanding of language, it allows you to both communicate better, while also understanding people better. However, I can understand how some disadvantages can arise from my language and literacy learning. More specifically, I understand that not everybody has the same education, experiences or thought process, and as such, it can sometimes be difficult to communicate with some people.

How might your experience with language and literacy connect to larger social realities (e.g., of your life, family, generation, gender, race, culture, nation, geographic location, historical moment, etc.)?

I feel as though being literate and having a solid foundation of literacy and language allows you to take things for much more than they appear at the surface level, and to appreciate the broader scope of social realities. One example is with geopolitical issues. Language and literacy skills, and especially having media literacy, allows you to appreciate and understand the fact that we are just one small part of the world, and there are people all around the globe, each with their own realities and their own issues that they have to combat. As such, I feel as though having experience with language and literacy, and just communicating with and listening to others, allows you to be more aware of the world around you.