

## **Progression 1: Reading and Responding to Texts**

In this first progression, we will focus on developing an understanding of your own social literacy. Before we begin, we should first define “social literacy?”

### The Social Part:

Social Skills, Social Cognition, Emotional Intelligence—All these things describe an individual’s ability to connect effectively with those around them.

### The Literacy Part:

In general, literacy is defined as “the ability to read and write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.” In even simpler terms, literacy is an individual’s ability to “deliberately mediate [comprehend/navigate] their world.”

### Putting it together:

Traditionally we have focused on teaching students and individuals to improve their ‘social skills,’ ‘communication skills,’ and ‘organization skills.’ But in today’s fast changing society we must move from a rigid definition of social skills as conversation skills to a broader understanding of Social Literacy: an individual’s ability to successfully and deliberately mediate their world as family members, workers, citizens, and lifelong learners.

You will be working on a series of complex (and hopefully fun) assignments that ask you to do several things:

1. Read/listen to three short commencement speeches.
2. Identify the main points through summary; identify the most salient ideas through paraphrase; identify the texts’ most authoritative or demonstrative uses of language through quotations.
3. Think about the importance of purpose in writing, and how your understanding of language and rhetoric can help you identify it.
4. Learn to utilize tone, style, language, and diction and discover how they are fundamental to clean, persuasive writing.
5. Craft a well thought out, reflective, literacy essay that employs all of the above.

To aid you on this journey, you will be introduced to several key writing and rhetorical concepts during this progression. By the end of this progression, you should understand the following key terms: summary, analysis, purpose, audience, and tone. You should also understand the basic idea of genre and know the components of a literacy narrative and how to apply these to your own ideas. Lastly, you will learn how to examine the relationship between the things you read and the environments that create them.

You will be expected to follow MLA documentation and to perform basic surface editing for this progression. We will review these things, but you will also be expected to seek out information on your own, within your textbook and via other resources, such as the links I provide on your Moodle, your peers, and the LRC.

Sounds simple enough, right? Let's take it step by step.

### **Exercise 1: Summary, Paraphrase, Quotation**

This exercise involves reading, which, if done actively, can help you learn about writing itself. Keep up with the way you respond to the speeches as you read and study them (through the use of annotation and/or note-taking). Mark phrases or images that strike you as interesting or important in some way. Think about the way the writer(s) language conveys ideas. But most important, record your thoughts about what you are reading. Make marginal notes – annotate, annotate, annotate. You are trying to discover what the essay is saying, and how (and perhaps why).

Then complete the following:

Write summaries of all three speeches. Remember, a summary presents the essence of the original essay, which will include the essay's controlling idea as well as its supporting ideas. Remember that a summary does not focus on the specific details nor does it include your opinion.

Paraphrase one of each essay's most critical passages (this will be subjective; I assign this knowing different students will choose different passages). Your paraphrase should be shorter than the passage you select. **Include this paraphrase in your summaries and mark it with italics.**

Also include one quote that you think is most striking and relevant within the summary. Make certain you use correct MLA citation.

Each summary should not exceed 200 words per.

You do not need a works cited for this assignment. We will work on that later. Just put each speech's summary on its own page in your word doc and title it accordingly.

Hint: to complete this summary, remember to think about what the writer was trying to say. To do this, go through the piece, paragraph by paragraph, and figure out what the main point of that particular paragraph is. Write this down. Once you have figured out what all the paragraphs are saying, then try to write, in your own words, how they all "go together." Things you might want to think about include: What was the writer saying, overall? What were the main points the writer used to support his or her idea?

## **Exercise 2: Summary of a Central Event**

For this exercise you will be reconstructing an event from your past that played a significant role in your development of social literacy. This will be a concise and focused self-reading, with as many relevant, concrete details as you include.

For guidance, reflect back on the speeches you have read throughout the progression and think about the ways in which each writer infused their stories with vivid language and rich sensory details. This type of writing pulls in the audience and serves a rhetorical purpose by eliciting emotional responses from the reader. Also noteworthy is their use of elements, such as humor and/or sadness, which also appeal to the reader, drawing in their interest in the speaker and his or her tale.

Now think about your own rhetorical purpose as you recreate this memory for your audience. What components of the story are most important for your purpose? What details can you include in order to infuse your narrative with life and style? What tone will you take, based upon the emotional effect you wish to have upon your reader?

The event you narrate must be a singular incident. It can involve one person or many. The only rules are that:

1. Your event must describe a time, place, event, or individual that played a role in the development of your social literacy, as you are coming to understand it through the context of this class.
2. You must create as vivid and detailed a reconstruction of this particular memory as you can. Use figurative language, sensory detail, emotionally charged anecdotes, etc. in order to recreate the moment in time within your reader's mind.

Hint: When deciding what event to write about, think about a moment of transition, confrontation, or reassurance. It may also help to think of this event as three parts: composing the setting, describing the event, reflecting on the event.

350-500 words, Double-spaced.

**Exercise 3: Letter to Someone Who Should Read This Speech**

For this exercise you will choose two of the speeches that particularly resonate with you, but even more importantly, that will also resonate with someone you know. Or perhaps they carry a message within them that you think someone you know should “hear.” Review your notes on these two speeches. Look over your summaries.

Then, compose a letter explaining the connection between the two essays. As you compose that letter, think about ways to use evidence from the essays to interest your reader in the connection: you might, for instance, tell a story from your own life, or recall an experience shared between the two of you that will ground the idea in a common understanding. Think about what textual information the reader will need to be told so that the connection will make sense. Establish sufficient context for understanding.

Hint: For this exercise, you will get to explore your own ideas, which, really, is what "academic writing" is all about. And while it is true that you need to follow certain rules (in any kind of writing), the most important thing is convincing your audience. So, for this assignment, your job is to persuade your letter recipient of the connection you are establishing between the speeches and convince them that they want to read the speeches themselves.

Make sure you write in a letter format and make sure you give your recipient proper context for their receiving your letter. Additionally, keep in mind who you are writing to and make sure you address this person in a convincing way—more casual with a friend, probably more formal with a high school teacher, more calculating with your parents. You can have fun with this, too, I promise.

350 word minimum. Double-spaced.

## **ESSAY 1: Literacy Narrative**

For this progression, you will be engaging in a personal literacy narrative in which you discuss your own social literacy and reflect upon the various factors (communal, cultural, political, familial, academic, etc.) that contribute to it. In this way, you are becoming *literate* in regard to your understanding of the ways in which these outside forces have played a role in shaping your thoughts and your ability to be an active, self-aware member of your various communities and beyond.

To achieve this, you will write a story about how you might have acquired behaviors and attitudes related to social literacy and what you learned from the experience. In addition, you are encouraged to consider not only how these behaviors and/or words may have affected you, but how they affect society, as well.

You may wish to consider some or a few of the following as you draft your essay:

- Your educational background as well as that of those closest to you and how this relationship might have influenced you.
- The attitude towards communication within any communities you might belong.
- The ways in which the various speeches we have read throughout the progression were crafted. (Remember there is no single way to craft this essay.)
- Any transformative experiences that pertain to your literacy.
- Your feelings in general towards your own concept of social literacy.

You are not being graded on the ideas you hold, but rather on your ability to convey them in an effectual way. Additionally, I will be looking to see that you are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the ways in which your chosen experience has influenced your own social literacy.

### **Literacy Narrative Guidelines**

A. The completed narrative should be submitted in a file folder (your working folder) with all the drafts as well as your peer review sheet and any comments received from me. Additionally, you will upload your final draft to our class Moodle site.

B. The narrative should explore an event (or a series of events) that exemplifies your literate practices relevant to some aspect of the speeches we have read.

C. The narrative should have a thesis, which addresses the importance of this literacy for you personally and perhaps also for people generally. Ideally, this thesis should be subtly developed (rather than explicitly stated). Be aware that a subtle thesis does not necessarily occur in one single sentence. Rather, you should *show* your readers, rather than *tell* them, the relationship between your feelings towards education, and the belief you are working with. Furthermore, it will greatly strengthen your essay if you relay the importance and meaning of the experience for you and/or for a larger community. In other words think beyond yourself to show your reader this is an issue of importance beyond just you.

D. The narrative should have a title and an introductory paragraph that promote interest.

E. The narrative should support claims about your literacy through vivid description and analysis of the significant event and the person(s) involved.

F. The narrative should have effective transitions (between sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections).

G. The narrative should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors.

Genre: Personal Narrative / Creative Non-Fiction. 1000-1250 words, double-spaced, using MLA format. If you include outside sources, you must include a Works Cited.

Important Dates:

- September 23: First Draft due. Please bring three (2) copies to class along with the Peer Review Sheet and Peer Review Rubric (you will find these on the Moodle).
- September 30: "Final" Draft due along with a complete writing packet.

### **Key Terms and Ideas for Progression 1:**

Analyze: To examine systematically and in detail the organization or structure of (something, esp. information), typically for purposes of explanation.

Audience: The target, or intended reader(s) of your text.

Cause and Effect: A method of paragraph or essay development in which a writer analyzes the reasons for--and/or the consequences of--an action, event, or decision.

Compare and Contrast: To find the similarities and differences within.

Figurative Language: Language in which figures of speech such as metaphor, freely occur.

Hyperbole: Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Example: There is one million assignments for my English class.

Literacy: The ability to “read” for knowledge; competence or knowledge in a specified area. Traditionally refers to reading and writing of texts, but evolving definitions of literacy now include understanding of information relevant to a particular community. Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development.

Literacy Narrative: A told story about the writer’s journey to understanding.

Traditionally about reading and writing, but defined for the purposes of our class as the process by which the writer came to understand or realize their own place in society. Additionally, should make clear the importance of an incident on his or her life.

Metaphor: A thing representative of something else. Example: A book is a door to another world.

Narrate: To tell a story.

Reconstruct: To put something back together; to recreate or reorganize.

Rhetoric: the art of speaking or writing effectively.

Rhetorical Purpose: This term refers to any set of circumstances that involves at least one person using some sort of communication to modify the perspective of at least one other person.

Rhetorical Strategy: An awareness and purposefulness in regard to the language choices we make and how they can affect the listener/reader. The rhetorical moves a writer skillfully makes in order to transmit their message effectively.

Sensory Detail: Utilizing the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) to pull your reader into your writing.

Summarize: Putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s).

Theme: A common thread or repeated idea.

Tone: A literary / composition technique that encompasses the writer’s attitude toward the subject and the implied audience. Tone may be formal, informal, intimate, solemn, somber, playful, serious, ironic, guilty, condescending, etc.

Transformative: To change something dramatically, to undergo total change.

Vivid Language: Language choices that utilize details in order to bring a narrative to life for readers by giving them intense mental images of the world in which your story takes place.