ENG 1102: Essay 1: Literacy Narrative

Assignment: Write a short essay about the **impact of reading** upon your life—you might describe a favorite text from childhood or a book you read often—a work of fiction, faith, poetry, have at it. A literacy narrative essay explores one’s growth as a reader. Don’t confuse “literacy” with “literature.” The goal is to come up with a thesis that states how one specific text, or perhaps a series of them, or just the written word in general contributed to your personal development.

**Basic Guidelines**:

* Double space your essay; include your name, the course number and section at the top of the first page.
* Avoid the use of the second person as it is conversational and too direct. Use the first person to describe your own thoughts, but better to use the third person in most of your analysis.
* **Do not** focus on the writing process—your reader does not need to know why you chose the topic or what you’re going to write about. Instead of telling your reader what you are going to do, do it.
* Write in the present tense unless specifically describing past events.

**How it will be graded**:

* A failing paper, either a “D” or an “F,” will either be completely off-topic, so short as to be negligible, and/or be so marred by mechanical errors that meaning is lost. Further, the argument may not be grounded in a thesis or else lack examples or explain why the examples given mean for the interpretation.
* A “C” paper is one that manages to competently convey information to the reader—each part has a logical organization with clear thesis statements, contains coherent and complete sentences, appropriately answers the essay prompt, and does not have so many mechanical flaws that legibility suffers.
* A “B” paper has all the characteristics of a “C,” and in addition displays effective insights into the essay prompt (possibly acknowledging multiple perspectives on the issues, or making particularly good choices about what material to address), has fewer mechanical flaws, and has an organizational scheme and general tone appropriate to the material.
* An “A” paper has all the characteristics of a “B,” and in addition displays few or no mechanical flaws, pays attention to appropriateness of word choice and shifting tonality through the essays, displays a command of pacing and sentence variety appropriate to the varied content of the essays, and may display particularly thoughtful insights, of contain stylistic devices which illuminate the material.

After you turn the paper in through Canvas, I will grade and return it to you via email as a Word or OpenOffice file. I will make comments throughout the paper to offer guidance on how to improve the paper and your writing in general. If you choose, you may revise the paper once for a new grade—I am a big believer in revision, so I urge you to take advantage of this option. You may have until the end of the term to re-submit any or all of your formal essays for a re-grade.

**What you’ll be graded upon**:

15% Introduction: You set a context for why it’s important to discuss the place of reading and writing in our lives. How has your experience in these areas shaped your values? What can other people learn from the story you have to tell? You may use a specific anecdote or episode from your life to illustrate your point.

15% Thesis: You state in 1-2 sentences your main idea. The thesis is the culmination of your introduction.

The first chapter book I ever read was Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and it changed my life because I was immediately hooked on Dahl (I quickly read every book of his I could find in our local library) and on reading in general. It is no overstatement to say that my journey towards being an English professor began with reading the words: “These two very old people are the father and mother of Mr. Bucket.”

30% Organization. You have two options for organizing your essay, depending on the focus you take:

OPTION 1: If you are writing about your experience becoming literate (learning to read and write), you will probably take a narrative approach, detailing your first experiences in school or your first memories of books or the first time reading or writing seemed to make a big impact on your life. You will want strong transition from paragraph to paragraph, and your paragraphs should be around six sentences in length to be fully developed. Your organization will probably be chronological, moving from stage to stage in your life.

OPTION 2: If you focus more on a specific text or a specific reading experience, you’ll structure your essay in a more subject-by-subject fashion. Your introduction will establish that you are writing about significant moments at which literacy or particular texts impacted your life and give a sense of why those moments or texts are important. Your body paragraphs will be organized around each of those texts or moments, explaining what they were and narrating why they mattered. You will still want strong transitions and paragraphs of roughly six sentences.

10% Conclusion: Regardless of which option you choose, you want a conclusion that avoids summarizing what you’ve just said. You also don’t want to say, “In conclusion.…” Your aim in a conclusion is to place the discussion in a larger context. For example, how might those experiences be similar to or different from those of other individuals? How do you envision the role of reading in your life in the future?

15% Grammar and mechanics: Your paper avoids basic grammar mistakes, such as dropped apostrophes in possessives, subject/verb disagreement, arbitrary tense switches, etc. The paper demonstrates a commitment to proofreading by avoiding easy-to-catch typos and word mistakes (effect for affect, for example).

15% Presentation: Your paper meets the minimum length criteria of 500 words, is typed with a title and your name on it. You follow your individual professor’s instructions for formatting (margins, placement of the name, etc).