

Narrative Essay

The **purpose of a narrative** is to tell a story in which the writer talks about their feelings, thoughts, or actions. In narrative essays, the writer creates a story that will not only entertain the readers, but will have a concluding point or message. Because narrative essays are the telling of personal stories, the writer is able to be more creative with the structure and organization. However, there are certain guidelines that should be followed when writing a narrative.

Structure and Organization

Introduction

The main idea of the narrative is established in the introductory paragraph. This is where a writer provides background information and presents it in a way that captures the readers' attention.

An introduction should also include a hook. This is an opening sentence written in the form of a quote or a description used to capture the reader's attention in the first paragraph.

In a neighborhood of well-groomed lawns, House 71 stood apart with its dusty cobwebs, dirty bricks, and creaky wooden porch.

A narrative's **thesis statement** is not exactly like the thesis statements used in argumentative or analytical essays. The thesis statement for a narrative essay does not necessarily need to outline the whole essay. Instead, it should be a sentence including one of two things: the overall theme of the narrative or a lesson learned.

Everybody thought that the woman who lived in House 71 was a witch, until one Halloween night when I uncovered her true nature.

Body Paragraphs

Narratives can be told in chronological order OR in the order of importance. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph. It is important that writers do not just list events or summarize experiences, but that they also explain what makes their experiences significant and how they relate to the essay's thesis statement. In addition, the writer should keep in mind that the narrative should be entertaining from beginning to end.

Below are some elements of the narrative essay that can help a writer create stronger body paragraphs.

1. **Dialogue:** Adding quotations that were part of a conversation can help bring a writer's experiences to life and show the personalities of key characters.

“I heard that she puts curses on children to turn them into cockroaches,” Joey said with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

I replied, “Well, I heard she makes candy out of kids’ eyeballs.”

2. Descriptive language: Thinking about the five senses (touch, smell, sound, sight, and taste) while writing, can create a vivid image in the reader’s mind.

With the sound of the howling wind as my only companion, I walked towards the decrepit house guided by the yellow moonlight.

3. Transitions: When telling a story, flow and clarity are key. Using transition words or phrases such as *next*, *finally*, *during*, *after*, *when*, and *later*, between sentences and paragraphs will make it easier for the reader to follow the events in the essay.

After what seemed like hours, she opened the door. **Despite the horrifying rumors**, I felt no fear as the Witch of 71 gave me a warm smile and said hello.

Conclusion

At the end of every story there is a resolution. Just like any story, the narrative essay provides a sense of closure in the conclusion. By the time the reader gets to the last paragraph, they should gain a deeper understanding of what the writer has learned and why the story they told is important.

Some information courtesy of:

Gaetz, Lynne and Suneeti Phadke. *The Writer’s World*. Boston: Pearson Education, 2011. Print.

“Structure of a Personal Narrative Essay” *Cartwright Learning Resources Center*. Santa Barbara City College. 2015. 17 June 2015. Web.