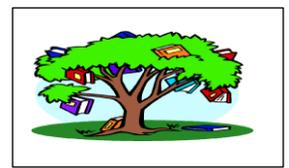


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



The Narrative Essay

This type of essay tells a story, which can come from your imagination, a personal experience, a historical event, an existing work of fiction, or some combination of these elements. Before you begin writing, it is important to determine the overall significance of your story so that you can frame the events you describe in a way that makes sense to your readers.

Purpose: to entertain readers with a story or inform them of true events

Perspective: third-person (*he, she, it, one, they...*), first-person (*I, we*)

Organization: chronological, in the order the events occurred

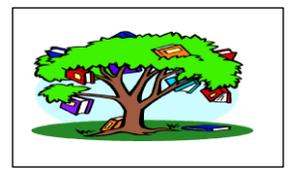
Common Structure:

1. **Introduction:**
 - a. Attention-getter or dramatic hook to get readers interested in the story
 - b. Necessary background information
 - c. Personal significance?
 - d. **Thesis:** point to be illustrated through the story
2. **Body (each paragraph):**
 - a. **Topic sentence:** introduction to one event or situation being described
 - b. Supporting details
 - c. Dialogue?
 - d. Transition to the next event
3. **Conclusion:**
 - a. Concise summary of the main point or lesson learned
 - b. Significance of the story for readers

Notes:

- Unlike most of the other organizational patterns, the narrative is really quite flexible in terms of its sequencing, level of formality, and **point of view**.
- The **narrator** (the person telling the story) may refer to the main character in the **first person** (*I/me*), the **third person** (*he/him, she/her*), or even the **second person** (*you*), though this is rare.
- Communicate the **setting** (time and place) through evocative details.
- Decide on a single verb tense (either past or present), and use it throughout the entire **plot** (sequence of events in the story).
- The present tense can always be used for direct quotes and thoughts.
- Include a clear **theme** (overall insight or message).
- If you are borrowing elements of your story from an existing work, be careful to avoid plagiarism!

Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



Sample Essay

There is no experience quite like whitewater rafting. A journey to central Colorado in early summer 2005 witnessed the Arkansas River rushing with newly melted snow. This recount of river madness will show how intensely religious American fun can become.

Colorado in the summer blazes hot in the day and freezes cold at night. That did not stop camping out on the verdant grounds of Noah's Ark. This place was crawling with Christians who were ecstatic about another summer of providing big fun to their patrons. The river beckoned for good fishing, but screamed louder for rafting, and we hit it hard.

The first portion of the river meandered calmly in the mountain cathedrals, with steeples rising high among evergreen altars. From Buena Vista to Salida, the elevation drops a lot, and the river goes with it.

A placid stream that starts off calm could fool anybody. Yet, once one gets over the birds singing and the sun shining, then there flows a profound religious experience. Talk about rock and roll, icy baptisms and the jerks, these tremendous rapids that made Benny Hinn look mild. What an awakening!

There were several stages in this conversion experience. The Seven Sisters taught us a lesson that going down brought an emotional high. One right after the other, these stair steps led down to the place where all these kids received the anointing of fun. The river of excitement took a turn to a whirlpool where the raft almost tipped over. This served as a lesson that it takes effort in paddling to keep the boat upright.

Lunch by the river, communion by the stream, found everyone in sweet fellowship. As for care for bodily functions, the word was, "dilution, not pollution." Never drink the water.

The Arkansas meandered after lunch through the forest, with eagles soaring and skin burning. Cover up- if not, then burn. Most of the kids had wet suits on, but the fresh water never hits the skin if something artificial is on it. As the barges made their way to Salida, calmness came over us. The end of the matter provided time to reflect on what it took to get there.

Anyone who knows whitewater rafting realizes that God can show up anywhere, especially in Colorado.