

Name: _____

8th Grade Summer Packet

Narrative Writing

Assignment 1

Read and take notes on the following information:

Introduction to Narrative Writing (from Studysync)

Narrative writing tells a story of experiences or events that have been imagined by a writer or that have happened in real life. Good narrative writing effectively uses genre characteristics and craft such as relevant descriptive details and a purposeful structure with a series of events that contain a beginning, middle, and end. The characteristics of fiction writing include:

- setting
- characters
- plot
- theme/reflection
- point of view

In addition to these characteristics, narrative writers also carefully craft their work through their use of dialogue, details, word choice, and figurative language. These choices help to shape the tone, mood, and overall style of the text. Effective narratives combine these genre characteristics and craft to engage the reader.

Writers often take notes about story ideas before they sit down to write. Think about what you've learned so far about narrative writing to help you begin prewriting.

1. **Purpose:** What issue do you want to write about, and why is it a problem?
2. **Audience:** Who is your audience and what message do you want to express to your audience?
3. **Setting:** Where and when will your story be set? What kinds of problems might these characters face? How might the setting of your story affect the characters and problem?
4. **Characters:** What types of characters would you like to write about in your narrative?
5. **Plot:** What events will lead to the resolution of the conflict while keeping a reader engaged?

6. **Theme/Reflection:** If you are writing an imagined narrative, what general message about life do you want to express? If you are writing a real narrative, what careful thoughts about the significance of your experience will you include?
7. **Point of View:** From which point of view should your story be told, and why?

Assignment 2

The following are examples from a project called, "This I Believe". Read the following to learn more about the history of this project:

"This I Believe, Inc., was founded in 2004 as an independent, not-for-profit organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives.

This I Believe is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. Each day, Americans gathered by their radios to hear compelling essays from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller, and Harry Truman as well as corporate leaders, cab drivers, scientists, and secretaries—anyone able to distill into a few minutes the guiding principles by which they lived. These essayists' words brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War, McCarthyism, and racial division.

In reviving This I Believe, executive producer Dan Gediman said, "The goal is not to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, the hope is to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own."

Please read and annotate the following examples (these are actually published student essays!). Look for elements of narrative the author includes.

Essay 1:

"The Power of Potstickers" by Lauren Brown

I believe in my mother's cooking.

Ever since my mother realized I would have to cook for myself in college, she dedicated her summer to teaching me the ways of the kitchen. Whether it was educating me on how to operate a pressure cooker, showing me the best ways to peel off the skin of garlic, or demonstrating the right way to steam potstickers in a wok, the resilience my mother had in passing down as much as she knew was admirable. She insisted that the exact measurements or the exact ingredients weren't necessary and cooking was more of an art than a hard science, but I still felt I would undoubtedly obliterate any flavor or texture with a single misplaced grain of salt; no compromise would yield perfection. Still, she persisted I pour rice into the cooker without a measuring cup and my heart sank with disappointment as I watched the watery, soupy mess fall heavily into the trash can.

“Sometimes, things won’t be perfect,” is what she told me, “and you just have to roll up your sleeves and realize that finding a different solution is the only way to save the dish.”

From then I started to see the compromises and solutions my mother would speak of, not just in the kitchen, but in her life around her.

My mother wanted to make us a traditional Taiwanese dinner, one her mother would make for her before she left for America. However, the pallet of my younger brother, only appreciating the complexities of chicken nuggets and pizza slices, refused to eat our cultural family infused feast. Next time my mother wanted to recreate the dishes, she opted for the frozen potstickers from Trader Joe’s with beef and American broccoli instead of cabbage and bok choy. Although this satisfied the tastes and likings of my sibling, I couldn’t help but despair over the changes to the recipes that I held so dear, despair over the compromise of our culture.

When I went away to college, my mother dutifully packed a freezer bag full of our pre-prepped food from home, and sitting on top of the frozen dishes were the Trader Joe’s potstickers.

Having roommates in college was a large enough compromise in itself, but food proved especially difficult. Caught off guard by roommates asking for tastes of my meals, I found myself naturally flowing into compromise the way my mother did, cooking for everyone and incorporating their preferences and restrictions. Egg noodles instead of rice. Less sesame oil and more soy sauce. Even though I didn’t welcome these changes to my dinners at first and feared the substitutes would produce a subpar dinner, I slowly found myself liking the alternatives more than the recipes. I continued, adding fried eggs, bean sprouts, spinach and spam to the prepackaged ramen noodles that only called for powdered flavor packets, and even my roommates began to show interest towards the unorthodox combination.

Although I find the exact measurements of recipes comforting, I do my best to add a pinch of this and a dash of that in my meals every so often. It’s how I get to go outside my comfort zone every day. And I see in myself a newfound wisdom: it’s ok to go off the beaten path, you can experiment, compromise can lead to something new and beautiful. My mother’s cooking taught me that and I expect to bring that with me wherever I may go.

Essay 2:

“I Believe in Loving Myself” by Samantha Sparkenbach

I believe in loving myself. As a millennial, I am part of the majority of people who use social media. I was convinced that it was necessary to have platforms like Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. I thought nothing harmful could come from an app, but I was wrong. From scrolling through pictures of girls who were living lavish lives that I would never have to compare my body to models photos that were most likely photoshopped, I was destroying my confidence slowly.

I grew up loving myself like any other kid would with so much innocence and happiness when I would sink my teeth into my favorite foods. What I would do to go back to a time where I could care less about what I was eating because it could affect the way my body looks. As I got older, I started to get more interested in fashion and makeup, I was more inclined to go on social media to get ideas and inspiration from online influencers. I thought there was no wrong in doing this because everyone my age was doing the same thing. People were posting all the adventurous trips they were going on as well as the most thrilling parts of their day. I was starting to notice how unsatisfying my life seemed compared to everyone else. I started questioning why I wasn't living nearly the same exciting way they were. Not only was social media making my life feel dull but it was making me judge my body a certain way. The more I found myself spending time standing in the mirror looking at myself and obsessing over the fact that my body wasn't skinny enough was making me lose my self-worth. The mirror was starting to become a daily chore where I would point out every little detail I hated. I was viewing myself completely different than I really was, and just causing destruction inside of me. I no longer wanted to go out or hang out with people because I thought people would see what I was perceiving and not enjoy me anymore.

I remember one morning when I woke up and saw a stretch mark on the inside of my leg and I fell apart. All I could think about was how models don't have stretch marks, so why do I? I was a mess about this and just wanted total isolation. I knew I could not keep filling my head with unhealthy acquisitions about myself. I decided that it would be beneficial to remove all my social media accounts to see if I would feel more valuable.

As time would pass that I wouldn't be checking my phone and wouldn't be comparing my body to others, I was loving myself more. I started to wear clothes that I felt truly beautiful in and adapted my own style, not the style social media told me I should wear to feel sexy. I had completely created an ideal body in my head of what was perfect and no one can achieve that realistically. My body is unique and no one else has the same one as I do. Through the process of loving myself, I have been able to help so many of my friends to do the same, and the glow I started to see within them made me feel so content. Through loving myself I have learned

inner peace and what it means to not rely on anyone else but myself. I believe in loving myself because my body is constantly working to keep me alive and healthy. I believe in loving myself because I deserve to think in a positive way instead of negative. I believe in loving myself.

If you are interested in listening or reading more essays please go to the following websites:

<https://thisibelieve.org/>

<https://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe>

Assignment 3

Write your own This I Believe Essay!

Use the following your notes from assignment 1 and the following guidelines to help:

1. Tell a story about you: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be real. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.
2. Be brief: Your statement should be between 500 and 600 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.
3. Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.
4. Be positive: Write about what you do believe, not what you don't believe.
5. Be personal: Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Use the following area to plan and write your final copy on the last page of this packet.





