

Your Education: A Narrative Writing Assignment

In this narrative assignment, your goal is to demonstrate how your own experiences and stories help you understand the world in a deep and meaningful way. Sometimes our experiences show us a harsh view of the world. Sometimes a single event in time reveals that the world may be a brighter place that we previously realized. And sometimes a single story forces us to think about and feel confused about why people and life are the way that they are.

Before you begin drafting your narrative, read and review Sherman Alexie's "Indian Education" short story. Notice how he focuses each segment of this story on a small but somehow significant experience.

Notice how he starts each grade with an interesting lead. Sometimes it's a statement, sometimes narration, sometimes a single image, sometimes a recollection, and sometimes dialogue.

Notice also that he has a message in each of his stories. In many cases, the final line of the story captures his epiphany, realization, or message. Sometimes he builds tension through imagery, dialogue, irony, and foreshadowing only to finish with a raw and overt statement about what the world looks like from his point of view.

The Assignment

Using Sherman Alexie's "Indian Education" as a model, write about your experiences from Kindergarten to 12th Grade. **Write at least six grade levels / stories.** Share your experiences as stories that have recently happened rather than looking back on them 12 years later. You can borrow from Alexie's structure – try to model your writing after his. This is a chance to try some different techniques if you like [i.e. Surrealism, metaphor, imagery, dialogue, irony, foreshadowing, flashbacks, story-within-a-story, time shift, etc.] The best stories will contain detailed descriptions, characterization, multiple techniques, and the presence of a deeper message / lesson / epiphany.

Assessment

Your grade will be determined based on the stories you write and their overall quality. Each story should range from 70-250 words, and they should vary in length as Sherman Alexie's stories do in the text. You will also share one of your six stories with the class.

Your Goal

Each story should capture a moment in time and suggest at a deeper meaning or realization – something you learned about the world, about strangers, about your friends, family, or yourself from that particular moment. Each story should be well written and edited, with a strong focus on "showing" rather than "telling." Finally, pay close attention to sentence structure and clarity. Don't forget to carefully proofread for grammar and spelling. You will have THREE days in class to write, plus your own time.

Due Date

Share with me on my website by **Sunday, October 28th at 11:59pm**

Assignment Value: 60 points

Your Education: A Narrative Writing Assignment

Rubric

	10	8	6	4	0
	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Meets Most Expectations	Meets Some Expectations	Not Evident
Carefully Crafted Lead and Final, Meaningful Line					
Vivid Imagery and Description of Event or Moment					
Subtle but clear communication of Message / Lesson / Realization / Epiphany					
Effective integration of a variety of storytelling techniques					
Appropriate Length and Number of Stories (6)					
Overall Clarity and Grammatical Correctness					

Assignment Value: 60 points

Your Education: A Narrative Writing Assignment

Close Reading of Alexie's Grade Level Stories (Choose 3)

_____ Grade

What happens in this story?	What is the deeper message / lesson?	How does Alexie's writing emphasize this?

_____ Grade

What happens in this story?	What is the deeper message / lesson?	How does Alexie's writing emphasize this?

_____ Grade

What happens in this story?	What is the deeper message / lesson?	How does Alexie's writing emphasize this?

How do these small stories work together as a whole?

Which lessons seem to emerge and reemerge in multiple grades for Victor?

SECOND GRADE

Betty Towle, missionary teacher, redheaded and so ugly that no one ever had a puppy crush on her, made me stay in for recess fourteen days straight.

Introduce person or place

"Tell me you're sorry," she said.

"Sorry for what?" I asked.

Tell the story of what happened

"Everything," she said and made me stand straight for fifteen minutes, eagle-armed with books in each hand. One was a math book; the other was English. But all I learned was that gravity can be painful.

For Halloween I drew a picture of her riding a broom with a scrawny cat on the back. She said that her God would never forgive me for that.

allusion

Once, she gave the class a spelling test but set me aside and gave me a test designed for junior high students. When I spelled all the words right, she crumpled up the paper and made me eat it.

"You'll learn respect," she said.

She sent a letter home with me that told my parents to either cut my braids or keep me home from class. My parents came in the next day and dragged their braids across Betty Towle's desk.

"Indians, indians, indians." She said it without capitalization. She called me "indian, indian, indian."

And I said, Yes, I am. I am Indian. Indian, I am.

Your Education: Pre-writing

Before you

Finish with a line that suggests that this story is meaningful

Specific Details / Use of #s

Metaphor & IRONY

Anecdote / flashback

Three Student Models

begin drafting, please brainstorm some memorable moments.

What happened?

Looking back on this event,
I now realize that....

K	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	

Three Student Models

Student Model #1:

First Grade

Mrs. Schneider was a kind, white haired lady. She was so old that dust fell off of her whenever she moved. Her class was fun and very adult compared to the others, though. We took timed math tests and I felt like school was teaching me something instead of acting as a day care. Fractions were mind-bending (to say the least), but she did a good job of explaining them. One day she was putting sample problems on the board when I noticed a problem with one of her answers. I raised my hand and said "Isn't the denominator a two?"

Out of nowhere this kind old lady turned into a demon and bellowed "Do NOT correct me!" The entire class froze and turned to face me. My heart sunk to my stomach and dissolved in its acid.

Though I still struggled with fractions I learned that Adults live in a different world than kids, where words hold much less meaning.

Student Model #2:

First Grade

Growing up on the east side of Ypsilanti wasn't always easy when I was younger, many people I looked up to, started getting into trouble and getting arrested. So one day my dad sat me on his lap. "Javon, now listen to me. Never follow the crowd, you are your own role model." From that point on I've never looked up to nobody except myself.

Going into first grade was kind of special, the school started student council elections early into the year. When my teacher asked the class who would want to be in student council, I quickly raised my hand. Without a doubt I won the election with an ease. After I won, one thing that kept going thru my head was that, I am my own role model.

Student Model #3

Sixth Grade

As I walked into my new Korean school, all the slang and swear words flying by me made me dizzy.

"What are they talking about?" My mom asked me.

"I don't know." I answered.

I lived in Hong Kong for 4 years and I had just moved back to Korea. My experiences in international schools made me sound fluent. I was able to catch up with studies and talk with my friends in English. But I felt most comfortable when I was speaking in Korean with my parents. I waited for this moment for a long time, and moving back to Korea was definitely on my wish list.

I didn't understand anything other kids were talking about. My friends made fun of me when I asked them what it meant. This wasn't the Korea I had waited for.

Three Student Models

$$57=95$$

$$56=93$$

$$55=92$$

$$54=90$$

$$52=87$$

$$50=83$$

$$48=80$$

$$46=77$$

$$45=75$$

In Class Writing Work Days [with computers]

Monday, November 6th, Wednesday, November 8th, Thursday, November 9th.

Be prepared to share **one** of your stories on Friday, November 10th.