

11th Grade Common Core Alignment

Writing a Narrative Essay

Narrative essays are a creative way for students to explore their supported opinions about issues that impact their lives. This unit plan uses several famous narrative essays and several narrative essays from *Dream of a Nation* as examples from which students can draw in order to create their own. It also provides easy rubrics for teacher evaluation of student work.

This process is aligned to English Language Arts Common Core Standards for 9th grade and utilizes the rich resource of *Dream of a Nation*. *Dream of a Nation* is a high Lexile level (1340), non-fiction text which aptly supports the Common Core emphasis on text range, quality and complexity. The standards addressed are the following:

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| Please see end of the lesson for Common Core Standards Alignment.  Learning Outcomes:   * Students will gain understanding of a topic related to a current social, political, environmental or economic issue found in *Dream of a Nation*. * Students will gain understanding of narrative essays, as well as the various methods different authors employ within this genre including: satire, irony, dialogue, point of view, tone, sensory language and understatement. * Students will create an original narrative essay which is modeled on one of the examples and deals with an issue related to current events and their own life.   Teacher Planning:  This is a unit plan. Depending on length of class time and student reading and writing ability this unit can take from two to five weeks. Students need to read the articles from *Dream of a Nation* in addition to several famous narrative essays. Strategies for helping students understand readings are located in the [teacher resources section of our website](http://dreamofanation.org/educators/curriculum-resources/lesson-modules/).  Unit Plan: Narrative essays using *Dream of a Nation* and famous narrative essays   1. **Reading *Dream of a Nation***     Students should begin by reading several narrative essays found in Dream of a Nation. Students can either self-select two or three articles from the articles below or the class can read several teacher selected articles. Below is a list of narrative essays found in *Dream of a Nation*:  *Painting Hope in the World* by Lily Yeh (chapter 12)  *Realizing Our Roots and the Power of Interconnectedness* by Mona Polacca (chapter 12)  *War and Ending It* by Michael T. McPhearson (chapter 11)  *Transforming Urban Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment* by Majora Carter (chapter 10)  *As Long as It’s Been* by Irene Mabry Moses (p.262, chapter 8)  *Building a Conservation Nation* by Jeff Barrie (chapter 6)  *Seeing Education in a New Light* by Geoffrey Canada (chapter 5)  *Helping Others: Finding the Will and the Way* by Sejal Hathi (chapter 2)  As students read they should take notes on how the authors structure the narrative essays. Students should notice:  -What personal experience the author references  -How this personal experience connects with the larger social issue the author addresses  -What facts the author gives about the social issue  -What details the author gives about their personal experience  -How the connection between personal experience and facts makes the reader connect and care about the social issue discussed   1. **Reading Famous Narrative Essays**   Students should read several—if not all—of the following essays:  [It All Turns on Affection](http://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/wendell-e-berry-lecture) by Wendell Berry  [How it Feels to be Colored Me](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/grand-jean/hurston/chapters/how.html) by Zora Neal Hurston  [A Modest Proposal](http://art-bin.com/art/omodest.html) by Jonathan Swift  [A Hanging](http://www.george-orwell.org/A_Hanging/0.html) by George Orwell  [Turning Poverty into an American Crime](http://www.thenation.com/article/162632/turning-poverty-american-crime) by Barbara Ehrenreich |
| Students should first identify the issue each of the authors tackle in their work:  Orwell—Imperialism and Power  Hurston—Racism  Swift—Poverty and Governmental Policy  Berry—Capitalism and Monopolies  Ehrenreich—Equality and Human Rights  Students should then evaluate the various methods these authors use in their narrative essays. Students should identify:  -Use of sensory language, point of view and dialogue in Orwell  -Use of satire, irony and tone in Swift  -Irony, tone and point of view in Ehrenreich  -Tone, understatement and point of view in Hurston  -Sense of place, tone and understatement in Berry |
| **3. Picking a Social Issue**  Students should pick an issue which has directly affected their lives. Brainstorm as a class the various societal issues people could confront. Students do not need to reveal any personal information in this brainstorm but hearing other students ideas, as well as teacher input, will help them understand the societal issues they face. After the class brainstorm have students pick two or three issues and make a list of life events which have been affected by these issues. Encourage them to be specific in terms of a moment. For example, instead of writing “poverty” have students write “last Christmas”. After they have made these lists then have them selected the situation about which they can recall the most details. This will be the social issue and the personal event which provide the content for their narrative essay.  **4. Gather Facts**  Once students have a social topic selected they should do some research on this topic in order to provide facts for their narrative essay. Facts can be found on the *Dream of a Nation* website. Students can look at the [Solutions and Actions](http://dreamofanation.org/solutions/) page. Have students first select the chapter and then the article which pertains most directly to their issue. These pages feature videos, partner organization websites and answers to pertinent questions from which students can draw relevant information. Students should take notes on facts using the Issue Fact Notes Handout. They should write down facts they find interesting but remind them that not all facts may find their way into their essays. They should only include the facts which are the most relevant and persuasive in their final essays. |
| **5. Write down the Details**  Have students choose which style of narrative essay they are going to write. Have them model their essay on one of the famous narrative essays they read. Using the notes they took on those essays have them include examples for their own essay, using their experiences which contain all of the applicable methods: sensory details, examples of sarcasm, irony, bits of dialogue, point of view, ect. Students should use the guided note sheet for their particular author, using the Method Table handout pertaining to each author: Berry, Hurston, Orwell, Swift or Ehrenreich. These handouts are beneath the Unit plan on our website.  **6. Writing, Editing and Revising**  The first sentence of any story is oftentimes the most difficult for students to write. To help them get started give them the Ernest Hemingway six word story: “For sale: Baby shoes. Never worn.” Have them develop their own six word stories using the topic and the style they chose for their narrative essay. They should share these with the class. Then, have the students use these sentences for the first sentences of their story.  Students should be given time to write without editing. However, once they have several pages—and before they are finished—they should meet in *writer’s workshop* to listen to and discuss each other’s stories. Writer’s workshop groups can be formed by grouping students who are ready at the same time. They listen to a person read their story aloud. The listeners can take notes. After the reader is done the first round of comments are positive. Listeners detail the specific elements in the writing they enjoyed and explain why. The second round of comments are constructive criticism and should be focused on a specific point in the text the listener details to the writer. The writer should take notes on what the listeners say—both positive and constructive comments.  After everyone has listened and read students can go back to working on their own writing. Students can participate in writer’s workshop how ever many times they want throughout the writing process. Some writer’s find it immensely helpful to workshop when they get stuck.  Peer proofreading should occur when the students think they are finished. Use the Narrative Editing Guide to help the peer reader check the story. |
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| **7. Evaluation**  Use the Narrative Essay Rubric for evaluation of student work. Partial points can be awarded for each category. Make a bulletin board of student essays to celebrate their skills! Students can also read their essays aloud at a reading in the classroom, school library or local bookstore or university. They can submit their narrative essays as op-ed articles for a local newspaper or online teen magazine or news source. Here are some possible magazines for teens to submit their work:  [Cicada](http://www.cricketmag.com/22-Submission-Guidelines-for-CICADA-magazine-for-teens-ages-14+)  [Teen Ink](http://www.teenink.com/submit)  [YARN](http://yareview.net/how-to-submit/)  [Polyphony H.S.](http://www.polyphonyhs.com/submit/guidelines.html)  Please send *Dream of a Nation* examples of your students’ finished essays and suggestions for improvement of our Unit Plan. We appreciate your feedback and insights. |
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Common Core Information Reading Standards:

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/1/) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/2/) Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/3/) Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Common Core Reading Literature Standards:

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/4/) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/5/) Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/6/) Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Common Core Writing Standards:

1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
   1. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3a](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/a/) Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
   2. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3b](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/b/) Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
   3. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3c](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/c/) Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
   4. [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3d](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/d/) Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3e](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/3/e/) Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Common Core Language Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/1/) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1a](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/1/a/) Use parallel structure.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1b](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/1/b/) Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/2/) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2a](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/2/a/) Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2b](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/2/b/) Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2c](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/2/c/) Spell correctly.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/9-10/6/) Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.