Narration

- Telling a story
- Telling the story of our own experiences
  - Things we do
  - Things that happen to us
  - Things that happen to people we know
Narration

- Make an appropriately detailed presentation.
  - Give enough detail to know
    - What is happening
    - To whom it is happening
    - Why it is happening
      - Details must be adequate enough to clarify events and properly sequenced so that nothing is out of order.
Narration

- Keep the events/situation moving.
  - Don’t bog down with too much detail.
  - Don’t get off track
    - Stick to one event
  - Use transitional words, phrases, sentences to keep the story going.
Narration

- Keep the sequence of the narrative clear.
  - Telling the story
    - Chronological order
    - Flashback/flashforward
  - Description
    - Spatial order
Narration

- Make an appropriately detailed presentation.
  - Use **specific**, rather than general language.
    - *The flowers were lovely.*
    - “The lilies in the vase by the window filled the room with a sense of the outdoors.”
Narration

- Make an appropriately detailed presentation.
  - Use **specific**, rather than general language.
    - *The dog came with us.*
    - “Steve’s chocolate lab, Gus, hopped into the cab of the pickup, ready to ride shotgun.”
Narration

- Make an appropriately detailed presentation.
  - Use **concrete**, rather than abstract language.
    - *It was cold outside.*
    - “It was 15 degrees at noon.”
Narration

- Make an appropriately detailed presentation.
  - Use *concrete*, rather than abstract language.
    - *She was excited when she heard the news.*
    - “She felt as if she had just won a million dollars.”
Narration

• Give a clear indication of the event’s significance.
  • Need to ensure that your readers know **WHY**.
  • Your job as writer:
    • to pull together all of the elements so they bring the reader to:
      • the universal truth
      • the lesson learned
      • insight gained by your experience
Narration: Getting Started

- Finding an event to write about.
  - Consider several possibilities rather than choosing the first event that comes to mind.
  - Make a list of significant events from your past.
    - Include only those events about which you can recall detail about
      - what happened
      - where it happened
      - when it happened
      - the people involved
Finding an Event to Write About

- Moments of enlightenment or coming to knowledge:
  - understanding a complex idea for the first time,
  - recognizing what is meant by love or jealously or justice,
  - mastering a complex skill,
  - seeing some truth about yourself or your family that you previously haven’t seen;
Finding an Event to Write About

- Passages from one realm to the next:
  - from innocence to experience,
  - from outsider to insider or vice versa,
  - from child to adult,
  - from novice to expert, etc.;

- Confrontation with the unknown or with people or situations that challenged or threatened your old identity and values;
Finding an Event to Write About

- Moments of crisis or critical choice that tested your mettle or your system of values;
- Choices about the company you keep (friends, love interests, cliques, larger social groups) and the effects of those choices on your integrity and the persona you project to the world;
Finding an Event to Write About

- Problems accepting limitations and necessities, such as
  - the loss of dreams
  - the death of intimates
  - the failure to live up to ideals
  - living with a chronic illness or disability
Finding an Event to Write About

• Contrasts between common wisdom and your own unique knowledge or experience:
  • doing what people said couldn’t be done
  • failing at something others said was easy
  • finding value in something rejected by society
  • finding bad consequences in something widely valued
Choosing an Event

- Look over your list of possibilities, and choose one event that you think will make an interesting story.
  - You should be eager to explore the significance of the event and comfortable about sharing the event with your classmates, who will be your first readers.
Types of Conflict

- Man vs. Man
- Man vs. Nature
- Man vs. Society
- Man vs. Fate
- Man vs. Self
Describe the Place

- List Key Places(s)
  - Make a list of all the places where the event occurred

- Describe Key Place(s)
  - Make notes describing each place.
    - What do you see?
    - What objects stand out?
    - What sounds do you hear?
    - Do you detect any smells?
    - Does any taste come to mind?
    - Do you recall anything soft or hard, smooth or rough?
Recalling Key People

- **List Key People**
  - List the people who played more than a casual role in the event.
    - Only one person
    - Several people

- **Describe Key People**
  - Write a brief description of the people who played major roles in the event.
Recalling Key People

- **Re-create Conversations**
  - Reconstruct any important conversations you had during the event.
    - Memorable comments
    - Unusual choice of words
    - Telling remarks that you made or were made to you
      - May not be able to remember exactly what was said, but try to recreate it so that readers will be able to imagine what was going on.
Sketching the Story

- Write for a few minutes, telling what happened.
  - May find it easier to outline what happened rather than writing complete sentences and paragraphs.
Testing Your Choice

- Decide whether you recall enough detail to write a good story about this particular event.
  - If you can recall clearly what happened and what the important scenes and people were like, then you have probably made a good choice.
Reflecting on the Event’s Significance

- Recalling Your Remembered Thoughts or Feelings
  - Write about your feelings and thoughts during and immediately after the event.
    - What were my expectations before the event?
    - What was my first reaction to the event as it was happening and right after it ended?
    - How did I show my feelings? What did I say?
    - What did I want the people involved to think of me? Why did I care what they thought of me?
    - What did I think of myself at the time?
    - How long did these initial feelings last?
    - What were the immediate consequences of the event for me personally?
Reflecting on the Event’s Significance

Exploring Your Present Perspective

- Write about your current feelings and thoughts as you look back on the event.
  - Looking back, how do I feel about the event? If I understand it differently now than I did back then, what is the difference?
  - What do my actions at the time of the event say about the kind of person I was then? How would I respond to the same event if it occurred today?
  - Can looking at the event historically or culturally help explain what happened? For example, did I upset gender expectations? Did I feel torn between two cultures or ethnic identities? Did I feel out of place?
  - Do I now see that there was a conflict underlying the event? For example, did I struggle with contradictory desires within myself? Did I feel pressured by others or by society in general? Were my desires and rights in conflict with someone else’s? Was the event about power or responsibility?
Defining Your Purpose for Your Readers

- Write a few sentences defining your purpose in writing about this particular event for your readers.
  - Who are my readers?
  - What do my readers know about me?
  - How do I expect my readers to understand or react to the event?
  - How do I want my readers to feel about what happened? What is the dominant impression or mood I want my story to create?
  - What specifically do I want my readers to think of me? What do I expect or fear they might think?
Planning & Drafting

- Seeing what you have
  - Do I remember enough specific details about the event to describe it vividly?
  - Do I understand how the event was significant to me?
  - Does my pre-writing material provide what I need to convey that significance to my readers?
  - Does my present perspective on this event seem clear to me?
  - Does the dominant impression I want to create in my essay seem relevant?
Setting Goals

• The Beginning
  • What can I do in the opening sentences to arouse readers’ curiosity?
  • How can I get my readers to identify with me? Should I tell them a few things about myself?
  • Should I do something unusual, such as begin in the middle of the action or with a funny bit of dialogue?
Setting Goals

The Story

- What should be the climax of my story – the point that readers anticipate with trepidation or eagerness?
- What specific narrative actions or dialogue would intensify the drama of the story?
- Should I follow a strict chronological order? Or would flashback or flashforward make the narrative more interesting?
- How can I use vivid descriptive detail to dramatize the story?
Setting Goals

- The Ending
  - If I conclude with some reflections on the meaning of the experience, how can I avoid tagging on a moral or being too sentimental?
  - If I want readers to think well of me, should I conclude with a philosophical statement? A satirical one?
  - If I want to underscore the event’s continuing significance in my life, can I show that the conflict was never fully resolved? Could I contrast my remembered and current feelings and thoughts?
Drafting

• General Advice
  • Start drafting your essay, keeping in mind the goals you have set for yourself, especially the goal of telling your story dramatically.
  • Don’t be afraid to skip around in your story.
    • Jump back a fill in a spontaneous idea
    • Leap ahead and write a later section first if you find it easier.
    • If you get stuck while drafting, make a note of what you need to fill in later.
  • As you read over your first draft, you may see places where you can add new material or make the story more dramatic.
As you draft a remember event essay, you will be trying to help readers feel the suspense of your story and recognize its significance. You will also need to orient readers to the time sequence of all the various actions in your narrative. In thinking about how to achieve these goals, you can often benefit by paying attention to how long your sentences are and where you place your references to time.
Sentence Strategies

Use short sentences to heighten the drama or suspense, point out autobiographical significance, and summarize actions.

- Finally, I felt a hand on my collar. (Bragg)
- He caught us and we all stopped. (Dillard)
- One afternoon, I pulled the trigger. (Wolff)
Sentence Strategies

Short sentences are used for emphasis only in relation to long sentences around them.

On one weekday morning after Christmas, six inches of new snow had just fallen. We were standing up to our boot tops in snow on a front yard on trafficked Reynolds Street, waiting for cars. The cars traveled Reynolds Street slowly and evenly; they were targets all but wrapped in red ribbons, cream puffs. We couldn’t miss.

Anne Dillard, *An American Childhood*
Drafting

- **Sentence Strategies**
  - Place references to time toward the front of your sentences.
    - Because your remembered event essay is organized as a narrative, you must regularly give them cues about when various actions occur.
    - Without time cues, readers may not know
      - in which decade, year, or season the event occurred
      - Whether it unfolded slowly or quickly
      - In what sequence the actions took place
Drafting

- Sentence Strategies
  - *On one weekday morning after Christmas*, six inches of new snow had just fallen.
  - Six inches of new snow had just fallen on *one weekday morning after Christmas*.