

Writing Assignment #3: Personal Research Narrative

Writing Assignment #3 will be a **personal research narrative essay**, which sometimes is referred to as an “I-Search” paper.

Background to this Essay

In many classes in the past, you might have been instructed never to use the word ‘I’ in your writing. However, throughout this class, in both the response essay and the reflective annotated bibliography, you have been instructed that the use of the word “I” was totally acceptable, even encouraged. In this essay, this use of first-person point of view continues. This essay is a research essay in which you use the word “I.”

Ken Macrorie, a professor at Western Michigan University, wrote a textbook in 1980 called The I-Search Paper. In the book, Macrorie criticized traditional research papers that students were often asked to produce in classes. He designed, instead, a type of research paper that asked students to use the first-person point of view (“I”) in their papers, encouraged them to explore topics that were of interest to them, and required that they comment on their research journey in finding sources and information on their topics as much as on any arguments or conclusions they were making on their topics.

This writing assignment in WRTG 291 is informed by Macrorie’s approach, although it does not involve all elements of the research process he asked for.

In your WRTG 291 class, you have been given access to a chapter from Linda Bergmann, “Writing a Personal Research Narrative.” Please access that chapter.

In that chapter, please review “The Personal Research (‘I Search’) Paper,” starting on page 160.

On page 160, Bergmann (2010) writes:

Although an I-Search assignment calls for a personal narrative, like most academic writing it is written to communicate to a particular audience, not for the writer alone. Its purpose is to help you discover and communicate the personal and professional significance of your research to a particular audience.

Moreover, pages 161-162 in Bergmann’s chapter list some steps to take in organizing and preparing to write your paper.

Sample Personal Research Narrative Essay

On pages 162-166 of Bergmann's chapter is a sample personal research narrative essay. Another sample I-Search paper can be seen by clicking [here](#), although this example has fewer sources and fewer scholarly sources than this assignment calls for.

Moving from the Reflective Annotated Bibliography to the Personal Research Narrative

For writing assignment #2, you wrote a reflective annotated bibliography on a topic related to technology. In that assignment, for each of the articles you found, you wrote not only a précis of the article but also some vocabulary, reflection, and quotes from the article.

Hopefully through that assignment, you developed an interest in a focused aspect of your topic. The following describe some examples of focusing your topic:

- You may have conducted research on whether Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are effective classroom environments. For writing assignment #2, you may have found 5-6 articles on MOOCs in general.

Perhaps, as a result of your findings, you have now done more research and have focused on MOOCs for a particular field of study (e.g., computer programming or creative writing). You then found more articles related to not only MOOCs but also MOOCs for learning computer programming or MOOCs for learning creative writing.

- You may have conducted research on cybersecurity. For writing assignment #2, you may have found 5-6 articles on cybersecurity as a broad topic.

Perhaps, as a result of your findings, you have now done more research and have focused on cybersecurity and mobile devices. You then found more articles related to not only cybersecurity as a general topic but specifically on cybersecurity and mobile devices.

- You may have conducted research on technology in the health care industry. For writing assignment #2, you may have found 5-6 articles on technology in the health care industry.

Perhaps, as a result of your findings, you have now done more research and have focused on the cloud computing in the health care industry. You then found more articles specifically on this topic.

It is this research experience on which you will write the personal research narrative.

Examining the Sample Personal Research Narrative in Bergmann's Chapter:

Note how, in the sample student personal research narrative [on page 162](#), the student begins by providing the background that gave him interest in the topic. He then discusses his first steps in researching the topic. As he describes his steps in the research process, he uses expressions like, “I was astounded by...” or “This idea seemed valid to me, but...” or “...let me to wonder...” or “At this point in my exploration I have come up with a slight dilemma.”

For your personal research narrative, you want to follow the same pattern. Describe to the reader [what you thought](#) when you started researching, [what you already knew](#) about the subject, [what interested you in the subject](#), etc. Then describe your [various steps](#), commenting on [what surprised you](#), [what ideas did not seem valid to you](#), [what research articles you may have questioned](#), etc.

You might consider your response essay, which was the first essay you wrote for this class. The personal research narrative is, in some ways, an expanded response essay. In the personal research narrative, you may be [responding to several authors](#) while [providing a narrative of your thought process and learning process throughout your research journey](#).

Length and Other Requirements:

Your paper should be **1800-2400 words**. It should include **at least ten sources, six of which should be scholarly**. The sources are to be cited and listed in APA format.

In addition, the paper should be formatted according to APA style (e.g., you should include a running head with page numbers, have appropriate margins, etc. in accordance with the video tutorial you observed in class, [How to format your paper according to APA style.](#))

Additional resources:

In our class, in the e-reserves section, we have a chapter from the book by Graff, G. and Birkenstein, C, *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing with Readings*. The chapter mentions various techniques to apply in stating what an author said and your response to the author. As was recommended for the response essay, it is recommended that you read through that chapter so that you might apply these techniques to this essay.

Submitting the assignment:

Please post a rough draft of your Personal Research Narrative essay as your instructor directs you by the due date your instructor provides. After receiving feedback on your response essay, please use the comments from your instructor to help you to assess your own rough draft.

Please post your subsequent draft of the Personal Research Narrative as your instructor directs you. The number of drafts you write will depend on your instructor's arrangement as well as your timeliness in submitting the assignment.