

## *The Eight Classical Rhetorical Modes*

### *1. Narration*

**NOTE:** The following is general information about the rhetorical mode. It is not meant to take the place of any specific instructions given by your instructor for this assignment. If your instructor wants you to write your paper in a different manner, then by all means do it the way your instructor requires you to do it.

#### *Notes on Narration*

An essay is called a “narration” essay if it makes a point by telling a story about (or “narrating”) something that happened. Here are some important ideas you should know about a narration essay:

#### **1. What are the important aspects of a story?**

- a. It has a definite beginning, a middle, a climax, and an end.
- b. A story has a definite direction and should flow smoothly from the beginning to the end.
- c. A well written story should observe three limitations:

Limited in time — The main action of the story should occur within a given limited amount of time. In other words, the story should not take a very long time like two or three weeks to unfold. Usually the shorter the time span of the story, the better the story will be.

Limited in space — The main action of the story should occur within a given limited physical area. In fact, one main physical location would be best. So don't make the location of your story jump around from one place to another. Settle down in one place.

Limited in action — This means that the main plot action of your story should be fairly simple and should deal with only one main problem or situation.

- d. Your story must build toward a climax.

A good story is going somewhere. It's taking the reader on a journey, and the “climax” is the goal of that journey. The climax is the dramatic highpoint of your story. It's the point of highest reader interest. The climax could be funny, surprising, sad, scary, or whatever, but just make sure that your story is indeed building toward some kind of climax. It's the most important part of your story!

- e. Your story must have some kind of point or theme or moral.

Why are you telling the reader this story? What kind of lesson do you want the reader to learn from your story? Somewhere in your story, you should tell the reader what the lesson is that he is supposed to learn from reading your story. You could state the point (lesson, moral, theme) at the beginning of the story or at end; you could even just “hint” at the point. But your story must make a point.

## 2. What are the writing skills needed for writing a good narrative essay?

- a. Begin in an interesting way.

Grab the reader’s attention early—ideally from the very first sentence. Never begin a narrative essay with something dull like, “I am going to tell you a story about how I learned that honesty is better than lying.”

A good opening is important in order to make the reader want to continue to read the rest of your narrative essay.

- b. Be clear about everything — the people, the places, the events of the story.

Try to explain things very clearly so that the reader will understand what’s going on in your story. Remember: you were there for these events, but the reader was not. You never want to confuse your reader.

- c. Use a lot of good details.

Always try to be specific about things rather than general. Using lots of good details will serve two important purposes:

1. It will make your story much more interesting to your reader.
2. It will help make your paper longer.

So remember the rule about the “five Ws” and give specific, detailed answers to these questions:

**WHO** are the people involved? -- Give names to your characters. (Make up fictitious first names if necessary.)

**WHAT** is the situation? -- Explain the basic situation at least at the start of your story. Explain anything else that might be complicated.

**WHERE** is the story taking place? -- Give a specific location.

**WHEN** is the action taking place? -- What season? What time of day? What year?

**WHY** are things happening? -- Analyze the causes of the actions of the plot.

- d. Use past tense verbs only when telling the events of your story.
- e. Regardless of your topic, try to end your story on a positive, upbeat note.
- f. Organize the events of your story based simply on the chronological order in which they actually occurred.

Organizing the events of a narrative essay is fairly easy: just tell the events in the same order in which they happened. You may wish to omit some minor events that are not important to the main point of your story. But for the other events that are important to your story, just write about them in the same order in which they happened in real life.

**Here are the specifics of this narrative essay assignment:**

1. Select a true incident that happened to you. The topic should be a new one, one on which you have not written before.
2. Make sure that your story is headed toward a climax and then toward an end.
3. Be sure to state in your story its point or moral or lesson or theme.
4. Your story should have a definite starting point, go on to a mid-point, peak at a climax, and then go on to a definite ending point.

**Here are the factors on which your essay will be graded (among others):**

1. If your story is truly a “story” —kind of like a movie you might see in a theater
2. How well and how smoothly your story flows from beginning to end
3. If your story builds toward a definite and obvious climax
4. How well and how clearly you express the moral of your essay
5. How clearly you have organized the events of your story
6. How correct your grammar and mechanics are

**Some possible topic ideas:**

- a. A lesson you learned as a child about life or about people
- b. The happiest/saddest day of your life so far
- c. A childhood accident that you had (a physical injury)
- d. Something you have done of which you are very proud
- e. A car accident in which you were involved or which you caused