Show & Tell Essays

In other assignments for this course, you are studying the ways that strong writers shape their grammar for rhetorical effect. As you write the show and tell essays, you’ll experiment with applying similar choices to your own writing—while also sharing your thoughts about an important grammar-related topic, issue, or debate.

Purpose: The main goals for this assignment are for you (1) to think carefully and creatively about grammar-related issues that extend beyond our class discussions and (2) to apply what you are learning from your study of mentor texts to the context of your own writing.

Audience: Your primary audiences are the class and me. This is another writing-to-learn project, and again, we want to learn from and with you. You may also want to write for a secondary audience; perhaps you’ll wish to submit your piece for publication, post it on a blog, or share it with friends, family, or future students.

Procedures & Requirements:
1. Think ahead. Keep a journal or worry file where you can record and explore topics for short essays that consider specific grammar-related issues of interest to students in our class. You may have flashes of inspiration if you consult some of the articles, blogs, and sites on the Readings & Resources section of our class webpage. (Note that you can subscribe to the syndicated selections.)

2. Choose topics for two essays, each to be about 650 words. You could (among other things) share a witty observation, develop an extended definition, offer cultural commentary, recount a telling story, present an argument, or try to persuade us of something.

3. As you write, experiment with imitating notable grammatical techniques used by the author of your mentor texts. Where these experiments work well, leave them; where other choices would be more effective, replace them and paste the experimental excerpts in an appendix. In either case, use the highlighting tool in Word to mark your experiments, and use the Insert Comments tool to add a note that names what you did and explains its rhetorical effect. The schedule below explains which chapters of study your experiments should stem from as you work through your drafts:
   - Essay 1, Draft 1 (due 9/30): at least five techniques related to Kolln & Gray Ch. 4 & 5.
   - Essay 1, Draft 2 (due 10/24): at least five techniques related to Kolln & Gray Ch. 7, 13, & 7.
   - Essay 2, Draft 1 (due 11/9): at least five techniques related to Kolln & Gray Ch. 8 & 9.
   - Essay 2, Draft 2 (due 11/30): at least five techniques related to Kolln & Gray Ch. 10 & 11.

4. Bring an electronic copy of your annotated essay to class on the due dates for drafts and final version. Since we have student-led workshops on those due dates, you may be asked to make a few revisions during class. Print your annotated essay at the end of class on the dates when final drafts are due.

Workshop drafts: Meeting the due dates for the workshop drafts is important for you and for your classmates who will be learning with you. Each time that you miss one of these deadlines or come unprepared for a workshop will result in a full grade reduction from your final score on the corresponding essay.

Grading: Each of the two annotated essays counts for 10% of your final grade. High-quality essays will:
- offer an interesting and insightful perspective on a grammar-related topic, issue, or debate.
- include ten different experiments with imitating notable grammatical techniques from mentor texts, with annotations that label the approach and explain the rhetorical effect.
- show effective organization and attention to detail in carrying out the assignment requirements.
- use creativity in effectively applying conventions for grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- give credit to sources for words or ideas used in the piece.
- demonstrate a developed and accurate understanding of the grammar concepts we have studied thus far in our course readings and activities.