

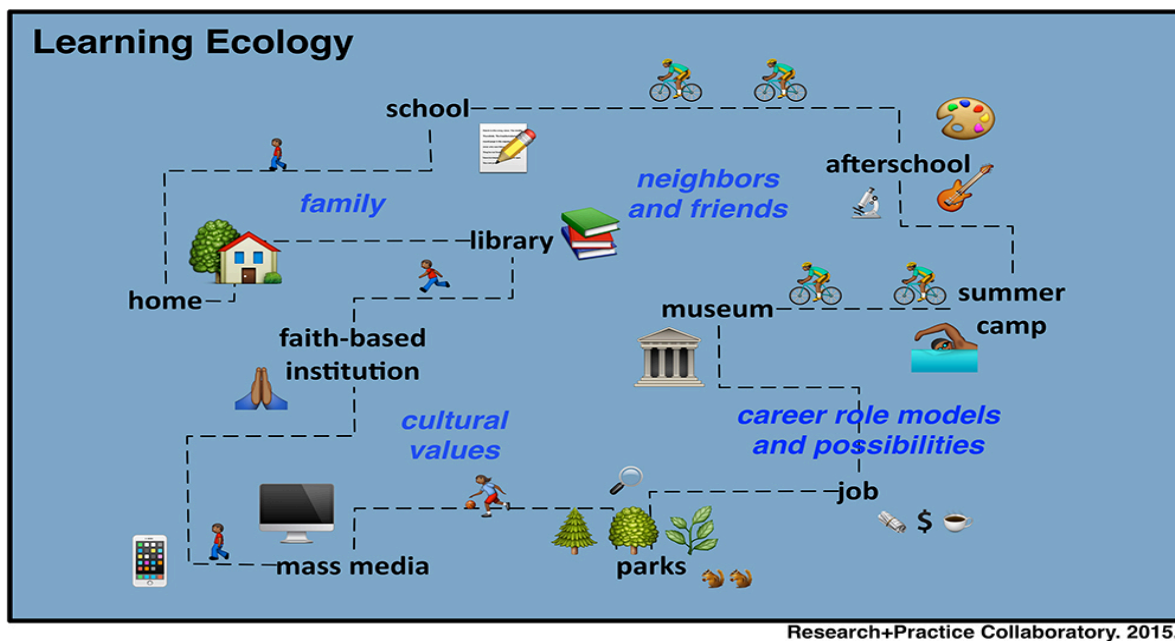
Unit One: Literacy Ecologies Reflective Essay

A **reflection essay** is a personal, first-person writing to examine and reflect on experiences and situations to evaluate impact of behaviors and habits towards academic and personal growth. A reflective essay gets granular about the circumstances and changes driven by the conflict and doesn't necessarily aim to tell a full story.

Task (What)

Analyze personal data (recorded on chart) then evaluate and reference it to compose a one-page reflective essay and a multimodal representation of your writing and reading process, with emphasis on how environment influences this process and products.

The graphic below visualizes the many factors that influence our academic decisions:



Purpose (Why)

- *Improved Writing Skills:* Understanding the ecological contexts of writing and reading helps students develop strategies to adapt their writing practices to different environments which can lead to improved writing skills and greater versatility.
- *Increased Engagement:* Exploring the connections between writing and reading—and their-surroundings can make writing more engaging and meaningful, fostering deeper interest in writing and greater commitment to writing and reading tasks.
- *Critical Thinking:* Examining writing and reading ecologies encourages students to think critically about various influences, which can enhance abilities to analyze and reflect on writing and reading practices, leading to more thoughtful and effective writing.

- *Ecological and Social Awareness*: Understanding the broader ecological and social contexts of their writing and reading can help students become more aware of environmental and societal issues which inspires writing with a sense of purpose.
- *Holistic Approaches*: develop agency to write more holistically and reflectively—instead of just for a grade or assignment completion.

Steps (How)

Step One: Complete the qualitative data chart below for the timeframes listed. For each time frame record data through whichever context/lens you choose. Please be encouraged to speak to family and friends for detailed data.

Step Two: Analyze, and evaluate your data, paying particular attention to patterns observed; look beyond the surface, meaning: what concepts, ideological patterns, and themes seem to emerge and what conclusions can you draw.

Step Three: Find someone to review your data and share their observations about patterns.

Step Four: Compose BOTH a one page reflective analysis and a visual that tells your literacy journey story. Also take into consideration:

What are my writing and reading processes?

- Based on my qualitative data observations, what concepts, ideologies, or themes have influenced my writing and reading processes
- What can I do to make meaning, make, sense, and make connections to my literacy and how can I apply these tenets to my being a lifelong learner?

Step Five: Create a visual representation of your reflective essay.

Criteria (Standards)

Your essay should express:

- Personal experience
- Personal voice
- Specific examples beyond simple description; exploration of emotions, thoughts, impact, intersectionalities—both negative and positive
- Self-analysis
- Evidence of critical thinking
- Understanding the impact that ecological factors have on communication abilities as it relates to broader themes or concepts.
- Honest introspection

Essay Structure

Beginning

Briefly introduce experiences reflecting on, honing in on one main theme.

Ask yourself: what truths does my data reveal?

Middle

Share details referencing evidence from your data as well as personal commentary.

Ask yourself: what “a-ha’s” does my data reveal about why I communicate the way I do?

End

Reflect on key takeaways from this process

Ask yourself: now that I understand, better understand, on my way to understanding...how my communication choices result from events both in and beyond academic spaces, what do I plan/need to do going forward?

Essay in Short:

- an overarching line of reasoning that clearly demonstrates understanding of key influences that impact your literacy
- A personalized and introspective tone—not just a list of “what happened”
- An analysis of your data—what does this all mean?
- Direct examples from your qualitative data
- A conclusion—now what?

Visual: can be something as simple as a timeline or as complex as an infographic: you decide!

COMPLETE THIS CHART USING PERSONAL DATA

	Formative Years (Birth-8th grade)	High School	Post-High School
<i>Physical environment during writing and reading tasks</i>	My personal experience with my physical environment in elementary school was very positive. I loved English when I was in elementary school. The content was easy to	My physical environment in highschool was very positive. The teachers were slightly more understanding than middle school. They weren't so hard on grading like middle	My post high school physical environment is extremely different than I've ever felt before. I have never felt so confident to express myself when it comes to reading and writing assignments. I'm not hesitant to engage with my

	<p>understand, the teachers were willing to explain the content and not be too rough on grading. The overall layout of the classrooms made learning very comforting and engaging. Whereas, in middle school it got harder to engage with the content, the classrooms were not comforting and the students being loud and belligerent made it harder to understand the teachers.</p>	<p>school teachers claimed. I feel as if my teacher in my ninth and tenth grade year helped me love my environment, she was understanding, wasn't scared to express herself, she pushed to help you express yourself. She didn't suppress your knowledge, she made her class fun and goofy. She had papers up around the room to help us with assignments and tests. She made the environment less serious and scary.</p>	<p>environment in conversation, being able to read my writings aloud without being nervous. The students aren't judgemental or disrespectful with the topics and add their own thoughts on your opinions. You as my teachers have given me the ability to be comfortable and less anxious about literacy. You are understanding and make class fun and less formal.</p>
<p><i>Social Interactions related to writing and reading</i></p>	<p>My social interactions when it came to elementary school were positive. The teachers took one on one time to explain content, they weren't rude about me taking a longer time, they had more compassion and loved teaching. Whereas in middle school they had</p>	<p>My social interactions in highschool were great up to my twelfth grade year. My teacher from ninth through eleventh was understanding, understood that sometimes you have to help provide for your family, if you had to work they would help</p>	<p>My social interactions have been positive as well, I can have deep and personal conversations with my classmates without someone getting defensive and hurt. I can have conversations with people who have the same maturity level as me. It doesn't feel like I'm talking to a brick wall all of the time. I can hear other peoples dissections of a</p>

	<p>zero compassion, no passion for teaching, were rude and judgemental.</p>	<p>stretch the deadline, she understood that if you get sick it's ok it's not the end of the world. They took time to engage with their students, they did not suppress your opinions, they were open to see your point of view or texts or novels we were reading at the time. They treated us like we were their kids. They were open to talking about rough patches in your life, they knew when something was wrong and they took time to talk to you one on one. They dissected big tests or standardized tests to deplete anxiety and stress. They went in depth on topics where students struggled. These teachers were socially and academically understanding and took time to understand each individual kids</p>	<p>text and build a new narrative on how I look at a topic. I also am speaking to others with the same vocabulary as me, they aren't as surface level when it comes to diction and tonality.</p>
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		challenges when it came to literacy.	
<i>Cultural Contexts that influenced writing and reading choices</i>	<p>In elementary school they used to give us reading on cultural events like the holocaust, black history. They didn't lie on what truly happened in history and was transparent to their fullest extent.</p> <p>Whereas, in middle school they codeddled us too much they weren't transparent and when in came to the students they would laugh at events that were traumatic like 9/11, holocaust, and lynching in black history.</p>	<p>In high school I had an increase in cultural context. The teachers gave great context on what historical literacy pieces we were covering. They didn't hold their tongue on discrimination, malpractice and what certain slang meant in the text that we were reading. They showed visual representations of the novels/articles that we were reading like movies or documentaries.</p>	<p>The cultural context post high school is astronomical. I took a history/literacy course last semester and I loved it. It was easy to engage with, the teacher was very outspoken but not too overwhelmed by her own personal perspective. She gave very in depth cultural context on each piece that we went over and I learned various new perspectives on historical phenomenons.</p>
<i>Technology & Digital Footprints that influenced writing and reading habits</i>	<p>I feel as if we are having a technology specific class to learn proper typing techniques, how to use different writing websites, websites to help with grammar, and us being the last year to learn to write in cursive. Elementary school was the best years</p>	<p>Technology didn't really change from highschool, other than new search engines we were using or library sources we were using. The only thing that changed was the heavy influence that social media had on students. They would show a</p>	<p>The technology and digital footprints have changed ever so slightly. The impact of AI is now a concern to some teachers, where with some they encourage it. For example, some teachers believe you should. Most teachers believe that you shouldn't use it at all cause it may be used with ill intentions</p>

	<p>in my writing and reading habits. When it came to reading they taught us how to highlight digital documents, how to make notes on certain statements and how to use google to find the full text from an online assignment. In middle school we did not have technology based classes, they would give us online science labs to do which were confusing and lacked explanation. They would barely explain only SOL content to use when it came to the writing and reading portions. The computers would barely work and they lagged and made us as students lack efficiency.</p>	<p>decrease in grammatical error rousing slang in formal writings. They would use false social media information for evidence in an essay. Or would use online information from wikipedia or opinion based websites as evidence in an assignment.</p>	<p>to complete a whole assignment. Whereas, some teachers believe that you can use AI to enhance vocabulary or help with grammatical errors. Or to create creative visual to go along with your writing.</p>
<i>Classroom Experiences</i>	<p>In elementary school my classroom experiences were good and bad. From kindergarten to first grade my experiences were</p>	<p>My classroom experiences were great in my ninth, tenth and eleventh grade years. I had great friends, great</p>	<p>My classroom experiences this semester have been nothing but positive. They've been very engaging and very comforting, I've had no issues with teachers</p>

	<p>great. I loved my teacher, she was understanding, she treated us with respect, she wasn't overly strict and let us be kids. When I started second grade the teachers started to be more strict, rude, lacked respect for their students, they were embarrassing, and would deplete your self confidence academically and socially. The students became less understanding, compassionate, and respectful. They started bullying me and other students, they would say sexual jokes. I would get grabbed in sexual ways by guys that 'liked me,' and I would get told that 'boys will be boys' instead of trying to stop them which made me hate school and I developed severe social anxiety from it. In middle school it was the same</p>	<p>relationships with teachers, admin and staff. The students were ignorant but not to the point it affected my ability to learn. The classrooms itself weren't too engaging or welcoming but were engaging enough that I was tempted to fall asleep in class or lose focus on my work.</p>	<p>or grading, they have been nothing but understanding. The content has not been too hard or confusing so I've been breezing through my courses. Whereas, last semester has to be the most stressful academic experience I've had in all my years of school. Two of my teachers were rude, prejudice, they lacked basic respect and made my first semester a living hell. The classrooms were overcrowded, the content was hard to obtain and was not properly explained.</p>
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	<p>way, the students were brutal. They would talk about me for no reason, would threaten to fight me or jump me just because I was intelligent or brighter than the others. They would call me stuck up or bougie because I wouldn't be scared to raise my hand or say the wrong answer in class.</p>		
<p><i>Specific Challenges (learning, personal, et al.) that impacted writing and reading</i></p>	<p>I didn't have many challenges in my elementary school years, the writing and reading assignments were easy and I was placed in the higher percentile range, until we started taking SOL's. I wasn't fond of test taking. They made me nervous and I would second guess myself on a lot of the questions. They didn't really take time to help the kids understand the new layout of SOL taking and they made it</p>	<p>I had some challenges in highschool. Specifically, in my twelfth grade year my teacher was very formal, very strict, and not understanding at all. He was very flamboyant in his email responses. He was very rude and lacked compassion for the struggles I was having in his class. He didn't try to stay after school to help me understand hard pieces like Shakespeare so I could understand them.</p>	<p>The only challenges I've had to endure were with my two teachers in my first semester. They lacked time management, understanding, compassion, passion in the topic they were teachers, lack of communication, lack of knowledge, and invasion of privacy. They added to past insecurities when it came to writing, comprehension and overall tested my confidence in my academic success.</p>

	<p>very serious and anxiety inducing. In middle school it was worse because I had a lot of social pressure when it came to school, due to me being bullied for being smart I tried to dumb myself down by making deliberate mistakes on assignments and was hesitant to raise my hand. I wasn't as engaged my attentions span started to decrease and I couldn't really focus on my work cause I was trying to prevent being bullied.</p>	<p>His excuses for him being strict or rude would be, “when you're in college your professors won't be as lenient.” Which I beg to differ because my professor in college may have given me a hard time on attendance or help but that was because they had horrible personalities and couldn't teach, not because they were strict. This specific teacher gave me extreme anxiety about the English subject as a whole because he placed a negative narrative in my head. That it will continue to become harder and the teachers will become less understanding. Which I now realize is a lie all along.</p>	
<p>Literacy Sponsors—people that helped/hindered your</p>	<p>I would say my advanced literacy teacher in</p>	<p>I feel as if my ninth and eleventh grade teacher</p>	<p>I believe you as my English professor have helped me be</p>

literacy development	<p>elementary school helped with my vocabulary, grammar and more formal writing assignments, and helped me feel more confident in myself. In middle school every single teacher hindered me in my learning especially my eighth grade english teacher, she was prejudice, she had barely any knowledge pertaining to literature, she had no compassion, she looked down upon you and if you needed help she would dismiss you and tell you to work harder.</p>	<p>instilled a positive narrative of literacy in my head that I cannot erase. They look at the English subject and literacy as a form of art, a way to express yourself without having to directly speak to another being. Having a teacher that truly love what they are teaching and looking beyond the negativity that goes on in the classroom is a breath of fresh air.</p>	<p>more confident in myself. I don't have as much anxiety when it comes to my proficiency in literacy and expressing my opinion on specific topics. You shy away from the previous misconceptions that have been instilled in me by previous teachers.</p>
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One-Page Reflection Essay:

My struggles in literacy development

My personal development through my years in school have been a roller coaster of emotions and self improvement. School has been a series of negative and positive experiences that have shaped me into the person that I am now. My literacy development has been nothing but ups and downs over the years and has caused me nothing but fear and anxiety. Since I was young I felt as if I had to be extremely smart and intelligent to be successful and be the spotlight of my family. I don't feel as if it was instilled into me or forced, once I was conscious of how you become successful and how to make a good salary I pushed my hardest to get into college and be the top of my class. Which I believe is still a good mentality to have, but the biggest thing is to love yourself while being successful. The downside to having this mindset is that it causes a lot of academic anxiety to the topic you struggle in, which for me was english. I had multiple challenges in literacy, I didn't have confidence in it, I didn't like doing essays because I felt as if they had too many principles and rules to abide by. For me asking for help or not understanding something was too vulnerable to me, it was my weakness. English was that subject that made me feel vulnerable, dumb

and illiterate. I felt as if it was the downfall of my existence, the one thing that someone could use against me. I wanted to be an academic weapon, the light of my family that nobody could suppress. The only thing that got in my way was English, I thought it was stupid, useless, irrelevant. The question I always ask myself is why do I have to take English if i speak it? Then I met the right teachers that helped me excel in English, made me look at literacy as an opening for me to be myself, to speak of the unspoken that everyone looks beyond. My literacy development and acceptance of English is due to my social and physical environment in elementary school, my well educated teachers in highschool and my untraditional English professor in college.

Elementary school was a breeze for me, I was in the highest percentile in most of my classes. I scored the highest on the vocab quizzes, I thought I was unstoppable. My teachers worked with me actively, they allowed me to help others. I felt so smart and helpful. If I had questions I wasn't nervous to ask, I felt comforted, understood, and actually loved the readings and writing assignments. Most of my teachers had posters up to help us on our assignments

and remind us of different rules that helped improve our literacy development.

I believe my confidence in literacy was due to my social interactions with my teachers, they helped me one on one and didn't embarrass me in front of everyone. When I was younger and even now I don't like confrontation, or to be the center of attention. My teacher made me feel understood and not pressured to do everything by the books, and embraced us to be kids but be accountable for our work. For example, when I expressed to my teacher that I didn't want to be helped in front of the class but to be helped one on one because I didn't like the attention it drew, she would set aside time during active reading to help me alone. This helped me develop a better understanding of each topic and eventually helped me get all S's on my report card. My self assessment on the reason I didn't like being the center of attention was because I had social anxiety at a very young age which came from kids being judgemental or mean when it came to not understanding something or asking questions.

My highschool teachers helped me develop a love and understanding for a

more artistic and nontraditional style of literature. They allowed me to be myself when it came to my writing, they didn't penalize me for using a different approach than the others. They weren't hypocrites because they embraced us to write like they would, they wanted to see what our perspectives were on each topic and would have us discuss our individual thought processes. Which sparked many conversations and allowed us to engage with our other classmates and have mature conversations. They were teachers that did not live by the rules, therefore, they did not fully instill that into their students. I loved not being confined to the rules of literature because I find peace in not being held to a certain standard. Although the teachers that held their students to the traditional rules of literacy they had lower test scores and the students didn't favor them which causes students to have less motivation to engage in class. I can personally relate to this because once I got into twelfth grade English I started to lose interest in the subject, there was no freedom of expression, no leeway, and no outlets to be yourself. My twelfth grade English teacher was very traditional. He loved complicated pieces like Shakespeare and old English pieces

which were hard to dissect and absorb. For example, we read Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet in class as a group, but the teacher expected us to automatically understand the pieces and didn't give us further guidance on what certain terms meant and the overall motive of the plays. He would assign assignments that were heavily weighted which produced a lot of anxiety for me because I wanted to excel in the class but didn't understand a thing that we were learning. This caused me to receive low scores on the assignments tanking my grade. Being an all A student, this put me in a deep depressive state because I felt like a failure. All those years of work and lack of sleep was down the drain because of one subject and overly traditional English teacher. My self assessment on the reason I lacked literacy development in my last year of high school, was because I wasn't getting enough guidance on each topic, I had a very rude and uncompassionate teacher, and a lack of interest in the subject. Due to me receiving low grades on the assignments, internally I felt as if the years before my senior year were a waste of time because I wasn't going to get accepted into college due to this individual class. Which obviously was a

fragment of my imagination because I'm excelling in college now, but at that time I felt as if I had a weak grasp on my academic success and control. I am a very independent person and I always have to stay on a specific path that I have placed in my mind or I will go through a downward spiral of emotions and confidence. This is due to what I stated earlier. I have severe anxiety and not having a set plan drives me clinically insane, which is obviously unreasonable because life is unpredictable.

Lastly, post high school has been a new journey for me but has been eventful and filled with great new experiences. The layout of college is more my cup of tea, I have free will and don't have to fall into strict stipulations. I assumed that college would be filled with excessive assignments and extreme workload, but I was very far off. I have had my rough couple of professors that lacked compassion and understanding but I pushed through and have grown from those experiences. I had the idea from high school that college English would be filled with fifteen page papers and long articles that would consume all of my social time but you as my professor have changed that narrative. You

have been nothing but understanding, comforting and have brought a new perspective of literacy to the table. You make class fun and engaging, you find multiple ways to target each student's learning styles and you are not overly judgemental. My literacy development and love for English has drastically increased just from being in your class. You have decreased my anxiety towards the subject and reassured me multiple times that I will be fine. I now realize that through all of these rough patches in English come from the lack of reassurance from the instructor. For me to be comfortable and produce good work, is a response on how the instructor makes me feel and their teaching style. You do not hold your students to the traditional standards and let us be ourselves. For example, when we have discussions in class you're very understanding, compassionate, and not judgemental. When I asked questions on the first day of class about your grading style you reassured me that you're not crazy strict on the traditional rules and the purpose of the assignments is to help you individually understand your students. I have now realized due to me having social and academic anxiety, that all I need is an understanding and

non-traditional teacher that understands that each student is different were human, and we all make mistakes.

In conclusion, due to my social and physical environment in elementary school, my artistic and understanding teachers in high school, and my untraditional english professor in college I am now able to pin points my inconsistencies in literacy and who has helped me to be the person in literature I am today. I now realize that the overall thing that was hindering me from my literacy development was myself. Not taking time to love myself in the process of being an academic weapon, or trying to be successful, caused me to hate the subjects that I struggled in because they drove me off of the mental path that I had placed for myself. Having academic anxiety and trying to be perfect caused me more harm than good. I now realize that I shouldn't rely on my instructors to help me be perfect in literacy because they aren't perfect either. Everyone learns differently, teaches differently, and shows compassion differently. I shouldn't push myself down because I'm not understanding as fast as the others or receive anything lower than a B on an assignment. But I should love myself

through my struggles and learn from my mistakes. I now have an artistic style of writing due to my great teachers in high school, and confidence in my writing due to my English professor in college. My takeaway from this is to embrace your mistakes and don't drag them along to your next journey cause in reality nobody is hurting you but yourself.

Visual Representation: Citations (Napkin AI) "Napkin Ai." *App*, app.napkin.ai/page/CgoiCHByb2Qtb25lEiwKBFBhZ2UaJGRiZjdlNTMzLWY4NzUtNDZmOC1iYWM5LTkxOTk5ZWZhOWRiYQ. Accessed 5 Feb. 2025.

Journey of Literacy Development and Self-Discovery

