**How to Write your Narrative Commentary**

This is the description of the Narrative task from the Examiners:

**NARRATIVE WRITING**

For preparation, students should undertake the following stages in order to prepare for the writing task. These stages are not part of the assessment and these materials do not need to be submitted.

• Research a variety of audiences and choose one for your writing.
• Record self or other recounting story/anecdote.
• Make note outline of sequence of events, etc.
• Compare with schema re oral narratives (Labov, Woolfson, etc).
• Study some written narratives re perspective, point of view, plot, chronology, etc.
• Produce at least two written drafts, experimenting with different narrative techniques.

**For assessment:**

1 Write up the final version of the narrative.

2 Write a commentary explaining techniques used to convey desired effects. You should explain your choices and how they match your audience expectation.

You’ll note that it is not compulsory to submit the preparatory material. In fact, it is advisable to submit the original anecdote, simply so the Moderator can see what has gone into the creative process. What are compulsory, and should figure in your Commentary are the following:

a) a comparison between the anecdote and oral narrative structures (you’ve already done this with Labov, but you could choose another one as well);
b) an account of which models of narrative (i.e. examples of published literary stories, fairy tales, myths, etc.) you were influenced by, and how genre was a factor in your choice;
c) how your anecdote and narrative models compare with your completed Narrative (flagged up as a weakness in last year’s Moderator’s Report);
d) techniques of composition you used, such as switching from third to first person, though be careful when talking about literary techniques such as metaphor that you relate them to linguistic theories. You can mention rhetorical techniques here, but best save them for the Scripted Presentation.
e) relevant linguistic theories relating to narrative (Grice, etc.)
f) Finally you have to evaluate your Narrative—how well you think the conversion from anecdote went, how it stood up to its models, what its intended audience was and how well it met its intended readers’ needs. If you could rewrite it, how could it have been improved?
As you’ll see, 500 words are inadequate for an extended commentary, and this is more than anything else an exercise expressing yourself succinctly, concisely and precisely.

How is it marked?

Your coursework is marked out of 80: there are 30 marks each for the Narrative and the Scripted Presentation. The Narrative gets 5 marks for AO1 (“Writes fluently and confidently to produce coherent, controlled texts”)—spelling, punctuation, grammar must be perfect here. It also gets 5 marks for AO2 (“Perceptive understanding of concepts and theories relevant to the construction of meanings…use of perspective, chronology etc.”)—this is your technique (flashbacks, twists, paragraph manipulation, etc.) The lion’s share of marks for the Narrative, though, is for AO4. This has two prongs:

Produces highly effective text, indicated by:
• perceptive use of genre conventions, eg 
original use of a variety of narrative techniques to transform original spoken version
• informed choice of style and structure to suit clearly differentiated purposes and audiences, eg 
thoughtful choice of style and structure to achieve ambitious purposes and audience

You might think all the above boils down to writing well, and this is not far from the truth. You must not have any technical errors (in spelling, punctuation and grammar) and your story has to be a professional one—good enough to publish. But there you also have to show that you are consciously using what you have learned from linguistic study, and this is not always easy.

So, the Commentary?

The mark of 20 is averaged over the two tasks, since you write a commentary for each. Now this doesn’t sound a lot, but the Commentary for the Narrative provides important evidence that your Narrative is informed by linguistic study, so it must not be skimmed over or written in a rush. Without exception, those students who did that last year did not meet their target grade.

The Commentary is marked purely for AO1 and AO2. This again means it must be perfect in spelling, punctuation and grammar, but it also must touch on the key concepts of linguistics and use the technical terms you have learnt—from grammar, rhetoric, discourse, pragmatics etc. For AO2 you must explain and evaluate the impact linguistic choices in both the texts which inspired you (your models, not your anecdote) and your own Narrative.

If all this sounds difficult in 500 words, it is, and caused more problems in the coursework last year than anything else. You have to be prepared to dedicate a considerable amount of time to it, and redraft, redraft, redraft. You’ll be much better writers at the end of it.