

The Use of Outside Sources in Narrative Essays

__ Since narrative essays primarily employ the art of storytelling, secondary sources do not play as prominent a role as they do in research and persuasive essays. However, some use of secondary sources can help to provide an interpretive frame for understanding an experience, to inspire or challenge the reader and to include necessary references for information outside the writer's experience.

Some common use of secondary sources in narrative essays include:

Epigraphs: Usually placed under the title or subtitle, epigraphs can frame a piece and suggest a larger interpretation of an individual experience. If the writer is focusing on an internal conflict or expresses a divided opinion about an experience, two “dueling epigraphs” can capture that sense of conflict. **Epigraph form:** Use italics, no quotation marks. Only indicate the name of the author/speaker of the quote. You do not need to list sources for epigraphs in a “Works Cited” page.

Example of epigraph:

Service is the rent we pay for living.
Marian Wright Edelman

Informational Source: These sources provide information beyond our personal knowledge. In a personal essay, depending on the nature of the narrative, the writer may want to add a few sources to establish that his experience is representative of a larger trend or that her story is unusual and not the norm, but nonetheless important.

Example of the use and citation of an informational source (MLA style):

Martin was one of the many homeless vets I met at the shelter last winter. Homelessness among military veterans in X (City) had been on the rise over the last few years (Smith).

Cite the source in the body of the essay and include the source (book/article) in a separate “Works Cited” page attached to the end of the essay.

If you want to include additional information, you can add a **footnote** that will appear at the bottom of a page or an **endnote** that will appear at the end of the essay. See Ehrenreich's “Nickel and Dimed” for an example of the use of informational footnotes in a personal narrative.

Preparing a Works Cited Page:

See second citation handout.

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