

Emblematic Object Essay Introduction

Description can tell us much more about something than just what it looks like. It can support an idea, a feeling, a situation, a place, a time, or develop feelings of empathy for the character or situation. It is a strong type of support that can be used in both persuasive and analytical essays. In this personal essay, you will write about an object that is emblematic to you, describing it and discussing its importance and value.

We own many things that we prize highly for more than just their monetary value. It may be an elaborate thing, or something as simple as a piece of paper with a special note on it. How does that item carry its meaning? How can you look at this one thing and see it for more than what it physically represents? How does it represent the person who owns it, or what does it say about him or her, or his or her past? In short, how is it emblematic?

Emblem is a word not quite meaning symbol. A thing that is emblematic (e.g., a scar on your knee) represents something more than what it is: more than just an injury, the scar represents a championship skater who worked very hard in a winning season. However, it does not represent that to all people at all times. On the other hand, a symbol does represent the same thing to all people of the same culture at all times. April symbolizes rebirth and love. A skeleton symbolizes death. See how a symbol is different from an emblem?

The item you choose to write about should be emblematic to you. It can be something that belongs to you or to someone else; it can be something you or someone else still has, or something that no longer exists. However, it must be something that has meaning for you. The following outlines some of the introductory ideas you should keep in mind.

Beginning considerations:

- **Style:** A personal or familiar essay should be written in your voice and from your perspective. While you are watching your grammar more carefully than you might in everyday writing, you are still writing as yourself.
 - Do not use words that are not natural to you.
 - *Do not use the personal pronoun you.* Instead, use I/me/my when referring to your own experience, or we/us/our when extending that to society as a whole. When appropriate use the specific nouns: i.e. women, men, student, teachers, teens, dragons, etc.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of this essay is simply to describe your object and both show and explain its importance to you.
 - Do not try to convince or preach to your readers. Simply explain what it is you believe and why you believe it's important.
- **Audience:** The audience for this essay is a general audience. Think of this as simply talking to your friends, family, or peers.
- **Limitations:** You must write about a physical object, and it cannot be bigger than a pickup truck.

Finally, remember we begin with the prewriting assignments, so take it one step at a time. We will read samples and discuss the details more as we move through work on the essay.

Emblematic Object Prewriting Assignments

Prewriting Assignment 1

Write down as many words, phrases, and sentences as you can to describe your object. Use all the senses you can: sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound. Describe size and color, shape and texture. Think about its weight and feel. Consider its emotional tone or vibe (the dominant impression). List every detail you can think of.

Your job is to get as many details and descriptions about it down as possible. Use the example I gave you in the slideshow to give you ideas of how to develop your descriptions. (The slideshows are linked on your syllabus and are on the webpage for each essay as well.)

You should have a list that is at least $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 page long.

Prewriting Assignment 2

Now that you've gotten a lot of descriptive phrases or words down about your object, it's time to describe it. However, you will set your description in the context of a narrative. So, in your Prewriting 2, write the story or a couple of stories of a time you remember the object. As you tell the story, describe the object. You should have 2-3 paragraphs.

Prewriting Assignment 3

Finally, it's time to discuss why the object you chose is important. What does the story you wrote in your last Prewriting Assignment show about not just the object, but also the person who owns it, or the time in your life that it represents? How is this person or time important to you and how does that show through that object? What does that object reveal about this person's or time's character, nature, or significance? You should have at least 2 paragraphs.

Emblematic Object Assignment: Drafting

Begin work on putting this essay together by reviewing the grade sheet at the end of this handout. I grade looking for those things, so you need to make sure you keep those things in mind as you write. Once you've done that, look over your prewritings, especially prewriting 2 and 3, and consider them in the context of the samples we've read and the discussions we've had about this essay and this type of writing. Use your prewritings as a start to your essay. Remember, your goal is to create a clear picture of the object and its importance. You may need to add to or omit things from your prewriting, and you may decide to take a very different path. It's all okay.

This essay is a personal or familiar essay. As such, you need to be writing in your voice and you need to use the personal pronouns *I/me/my*. Avoid the use of the pronoun *you* as much as possible. If you want to extend your points outside of yourself, use the collective *we*, or the specific group: young people, students, Americans, women, men, dragons, etc.

General Requirements

The essay should:

- Be correctly formatted: typed in a standard 12-point font, double spaced, correct heading and running header
- Be at least 3 pages long, though it can be longer
- Clearly identify your object in the essay

Turning In Your Essay

When you turn in your essay, make sure to read and follow the instructions given where you turn it in. See your schedule for due dates and where to submit your assignments.

Emblematic Object Grading Criteria

Your essay will be evaluated based on the following standards. Please review them and take them into consideration when finalizing your essay.

Format, Design, and Professionalism

- Was this turned in/uploaded in the correct file format?
- Is the paper is correctly formatted? (MLA)
- Is the paper is turned in on time?
- Is the paper is developed to the required minimum length? (3 pages)

Focus

- Does the essay communicate one dominate impression?

Content

- Does the essay clearly identify the object early on?
- Does the essay use description?
- Does the essay include narrative/story?
- Does the essay have discussion and interpretation of the narrative and description?

Development

- Are the narrative and description detailed, clear, and focused, creating a sense of the object and moment?
- Does the essay discuss and communicate the significance of the person, place, time represented with clarity and depth, going beyond a general discussion?
- Does the writing reflect critical and careful thought, going beyond surface reactions?
- Is it organized to move the reader through the story?
- Does it show creativity and attention to creating the overall tone?

Style

- Does the style—voice, tone, sentence style, and word choice—reflect the type of writing expected in this essay?

Clarity

- Does the writing reflect grammatical and mechanical correctness expected at this level?