

# Discussing Significance: Talking about why it matters

Prewriting 3



# Essay Ingredients

In every essay you need three things:

Your main point or thesis,

Evidence to support that point, and

A discussion or interpretation of the significance—why it's important or notable.



# Evidence Needs Explanation

Your description and narrative are your **evidence** in this essay.

Evidence supports your point. In essence, it's the information that proves it.

However, evidence doesn't explain how you see it proving the point, or what you see it meaning.

That's where significance and interpretation come in.



# Why it Matters

When discussing why your object is significant, you want to consider what role it has played in your life, or in the time it takes you back to. You also might consider discussing what you learned from it, or what you carry with you that came from the object, time, or person you got the object from.

Here's an example of how I've done this using the book given to me by my friend Amy.



# More than Just a Book

There is no small bit of irony that *Elmer Gantry* is the story of a small-time con-man who works his trade by building lies around himself and convincing others the truth of his intentions only to find out when his con comes apart that he had grown to love those he tricked, and he has betrayed his only friends. I spent too many years convincing myself that I needed no one and that I was self-sufficient. However, just as in the moment of deliverance in many great stories, mine came in the form of an unassuming heroine. Amy was my hero and my salvation. I'm not saying that my life would be over without her, or that I would have sunk to the depths of despair, but it certainly would not have followed the track it has, and I would be diminished without our friendship and the other friendships that came as a result of the lesson she taught me.

Like the book, Amy has inspired me and made me smile and laugh. We have shared adventures together and apart, and we have plodded through the daily journey of life hoping for the semester to end, or the next great thing to come along. We have sometimes grown apart, and now may not be as close of friends as we once were, but despite that fact, the depth and sincerity of our friendship has been a constant in my adult life, and I don't cross a significant bridge without some thought and word from Amy.



# What's the Connection

In those paragraphs, I'm working to really explain the connection and meaning between the object (my book) and what it represents (my friendship with Amy).

In an essay it's highly important that you do that explaining or interpreting, otherwise you're not really in the essay, and in almost every type of writing, the point is to get across what you think about it.



# Some Questions to Get You Started

- What does the story or stories you wrote in your last Prewriting Assignment show about not just the object, but 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?
- How has the object, time or person changed you in some way?



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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 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?

Don't feel bound by these questions—use them to give you ideas.

You should have at least 2 paragraphs.





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