**Background:** In his article, "The Stories We Tell Ourselves," Todd May suggests all stories are infused with values, make claims, and establish character. In short, May asserts that narratives are essentially rhetorical in nature. He claims even the most everyday stories are intended to persuade others to perceive us in a certain way––to make us seem funny, honest, adventurous, or strong. In other words, according to May, narratives perform identity, create a perspective, and often draw on familiar, pre-existing narratives. Interestingly, May also contends that stories can sometimes trap us. We have also read about several cultural narratives surrounding a variety of topics, including addiction, gender, race, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, the stories we tell ourselves can not only apply to us as individuals, but to us as a nation.

**Prompt:** For this paper, you will use May's text as a lens with which to analyze one of the target texts in addition to a narrative you will compose. Put another way, youhave the option togenerate your own target text for analysis.

**Details:** Your narrative could be a story you tell about yourself, one told by people you know, or one that has played a role in your family. Your story could discuss some aspect of your life during the pandemic, your experience of racial justice protests, or some other topic. Include a section reflecting on something the story does­­––how it persuades, creates a perspective, builds a persona, or helps make sense of something significant. A personal experience might consist of conversations, things you read, or events you witnessed over the past year. If you are recounting a cultural narrative, you might delve into what this narrative reveals about our society's values. Include thoughts reflecting on how this narrative has impacted you or someone or something you care about. For example, you might decide to write about a pervasive cultural narrative perpetuated in popular media that has resonated with you in some fashion. As a third option, you may analyze a second target text.

**Sample Steps:**

**Part One (1 - 1.5 pages)**:

**I.** Introduce the topic, May's text, and his central claims. Establish you lens.

**II.** Introduce a target text­­––one of the provided texts covered during this unit.

**III.** Briefly introduce your chosen personal or cultural narrative *or* a second target text.

**Part Two (2 - 2.5 pages)**: Analyze a target text. Identify the most interesting and important claims, and analyze the evidence used in the text. Discuss at least one rhetorical strategy used by the rhetor to persuade their audience and evaluate a strength and weakness of the argument. Include a section explaining how this argument coheres, extends, and/or complicates what May argues about narratives in his article.

**Part Three (1 - 1.5 pages):** Recount either a personal or cultural narrative that resonates with you. (If you are analyzing a second target text, repeat steps for part two). If you are detailing a cultural narrative, you should also provide evidence of the story's pervasiveness, either in the media or in some other form.

**Part Four (1 page):** Explain how this narrative coheres, extends, and/or complicates what May argues about stories in his article. Discuss how the narrative persuades, creates a perspective, builds a persona, or helps make sense of something significant, either on a personal or cultural level.

**Part Five (0.5 page):** Reinforce the major points covered in your paper. You might include some thoughts reflecting on the power of narrative and its ability to influence and shape who we are as individuals and as a society. In what ways do all stories possess rhetorical features? Recently, how are certain narratives being challenged or upended? Is this happening for better or worse? Explain your conclusions through the lens of your understanding of May's ideas.

**Requirements:**

• Papers will be five pages in length, *minimum––*seven pages *maximum*.

• 12pt font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, in MLA format, with a Works Cited on a separate page, not included in the overall page count.

• Use quotations from the texts, and when doing so, be sure to give credit where credit is due.