

# Essay on diction and narrative style in learning to read by malcolm x

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Malcolm X wrote the excerpt Learning to Read during the peak of the civil rights movement that sought to liberate black Americans from racial segregation and gain political and economic rights just like the rest of the American population. At the time the leadership of the black American community and the entire black race needed some kind of inspiration that was meant to guide them. As an influential voice in the black community, Malcolm X wrote his autobiography with the sole intention to revolutionize his people as well as expose discrimination against blacks, and this led to a couple of changes in the legal system through significant changes that elevated blacks from the position they held before. His choice of words and narration style in Learning to Read uses credibility and authority to invoke desire as well as logic to convince his readers. This essay will analyze the diction and narrative style used in Learning to Read.

The diction that Malcolm X uses is fairly simple and straight forward. He uses simple words and metaphors to tell his story about how he came to know how to read and write. He uses words that the readers will automatically understand considering that his audience were supposed to cover the illiterate and semi- illiterate black community. The simplicity and forwardness of his diction shows his lack of education but desire to express himself. For instance, in the phrase " You will never catch me with a free fifteen minutes in which I'm not studying something I feel might be able to help the black man", he tries to communicate his feelings about the impact education was making in his life in the simplest manner. He repeatedly uses the word ' white', perhaps to put stress on the anger even the mere word aroused in his black community. His diction is so simple yet laden with

powerful anecdotes and meaning that served to elicit emotions among his target audience. His words are heavily emotional too because of the emotion that he wanted to stir.

At the beginning of the essay, he writes in a more calm and persuasive style where he seeks to convince his readers of how he has benefitted from knowing how to read and write. When he narrates his story of how he began his journey of knowing how to read and write, he uses a persuasive tone. He convincingly wishes to seek not only sympathy but acknowledgment for having taken an interest in books, something that was quite unusual for prisoners. X seeks to justify his efforts by giving reasons why he thinks he passes for an extra ordinary prisoner. He goes on to say that those who hear him talk or read his work would think he went beyond eighth grade because he wants the readers to know and understand that was not the case.

Malcolm X seeks to justify himself and convince the reader that he is extraordinary. He uses simple language but then, wants the readers to sympathize and even do something like congratulating him for his efforts. He welcomes people to know more about his life but then wants to take a lead role in illustrating and making them know the reason he invites them. He does not just stop at making the reader know that he now knows how to read and write, but also that reading and writing had changed his life.