

ALEXANDER / SUCCESSES, VICTIMS, AND PRODIGIES

Lyotard views **master narratives** as limiting because of their **normative, institutionalized, legitimizing, and canonical tendencies** (31). Likewise, he suggests that not until we recognize master narratives at work and their role in constructing experience can we truly **examine, analyze, and work to change them** (31).

Meta knowledge

One example of master narratives' propensity toward simplification can be found in history textbooks, a popular setting for metanarratives because history represents the telling (or not telling) of stories (see Alridge; Cox and Stromquist). Derrick P. Alridge points out the problems with master narratives of history:

The dominance of master narratives in [history] textbooks **denies students a complicated, complex, and nuanced portrait of American history**. As a result, students often receive information that is **inaccurate, simplistic, and disconnected** from the realities of contemporary local, national, and world affairs. (663)

Okay, but depending on the age that is necessary! Abstract thought doesn't tend to develop until ~late middle school

Little Narrative
Individualized stories that challenge the ~~the~~ usual master narrative

Invoking the literacy-as-success master narrative in one's personal story has many of these same negative results, including a naive and partial understanding of literacy and one's relationship with it. But if incorporating the master narrative that literacy automatically leads to success is incomplete and even inaccurate, then what other representational options do students have when they compose a literacy narrative? Recent postmodern discussions have emphasized and privileged the **importance of the "little" or local, more specific, narratives of literacy that contrast with and challenge the master narratives** (Lyotard 31, 37, 60). Whereas master narratives, like the success narrative, are orthodox and legitimate, **little narratives are unsanctioned, artistic, and imaginative**; they are less generalizable and more individualized and situated (Lyotard 31, 60). In fact, little narratives assume that **"literacy is multiple, contextual, and ideological"** (Daniell 403), and they "present many truths about literacy, not one Truth about it" (406). In addition, little narratives are often told by marginalized groups, such as **women and minorities**, whose stories run counter to the dominant literacy myths (e.g., Brodkey; Daniell; Gere). Although little narratives do take into account similarities and differences of communities, they do not try to reify experience or stereotype large groups of people like master narratives do. Rather, little narratives allow us to see **"their importantly oppositional, or critical, social, and political energies"** (Kreiwirth 310); the little narratives critique and challenge the dominant master narratives. In sum, little narratives "are more restricted in scope, [are] more contextually bound, and seek to make sense of lived experience in a particular domain" (Sandlin and Clark 1002).

African American Language ~~and~~, and maybe the criticism that women ~~the~~ who use placeholder words such as "like" are less intelligent

Questioning ideas allows for expansive thought