

Personal Narrative Project

Length: 5-7 full pages

Rough Draft Due: February 3rd

Follow MLA Conventions*

Final Draft Due: February 5th

*double-spaced with one-inch margins, in Times New Roman, 12 font. See sample paper on Canvas.

Your assignment is to write a personal narrative about a moment of significance in your life. You will use the elements of good personal narratives (scenes, characterization, reflection) to construct your essay. You must also construct this personal narrative to be both significant and persuasive for a particular audience.

Throughout our lives, we experience both large and subtle changes, and these transitions often take us into new territory. Sometimes these shifts are inevitable: we grow up and progress from grade to grade, or we outgrow our group of friends and move into new circles. Sometimes these changes are abrupt and difficult: our parents decide to move to a new town, or they divorce, or we suffer the loss of someone we love. Sometimes these experiences are exciting or joyful: we are selected for an honor, or we discover we have a passion for a particular activity. Changes can also be subtle, interior shifts that we feel but others may not see right away. For example, we start to doubt the teachings of our teachers or church, or we are forced by circumstances to be more independent and self-reliant.

For this essay, **you will select a moment of significance in your life, and you will compose a 5-7 page essay that conveys the importance of that experience to an audience.** A few notes about topic selection: first, don't feel as though your essay has to be an event from your childhood; it simply has to be from your past experiences. Also, don't feel as though it must be a traumatic event. This is a personal essay, not a private one. Write whatever you feel comfortable writing. Good writers see significance in both the small and large moments.

Over the next few weeks, you'll continue to supplement your writing skills through discussion of and practice with elements of personal narrative writing—concrete details, characters, setting, dialogue, action, and reflection—and you'll need to be constantly evaluating why you are telling readers about this experience. Simply telling events is not enough. Writers of personal narrative need to reflect and make meaning from their experiences. Thus, I am going to encourage you to engage repeatedly in a process of rigorous reflection and research through the various stages of this assignment. The end result will be an essay that:

- Follows an appropriate form and displays intentional organization.
- Uses concrete detail, characters, setting, dialogue, action, and reflection to fulfill your intended purpose.
- Successfully conveys the subject to your intended audience and persuades them of the subject's significance.
- Features your unique voice.
- Provides sufficient insight through reflection.

Here are some questions that may help you to begin thinking about your personal essay:

- What are the primary moments of change or transition in your life so far? (e.g., a turning point in your ethical development, a critical moment in your literacy development, a change in your beliefs, a shift in your sense of identity)
- How has this experience shaped you in ways your peers perhaps have not been impacted?
- In what ways have the effects of this unique experience stayed with you over time?
- Do you see the ensuing changes as positive or negative (or both)?
- Did you understand ahead of time that this change was coming? Did you anticipate or fear it?
- Was this change discussed by your family or community? If so, in what tones and context?
- What in this new experience surprised you? Was anything unexpectedly familiar?
- How has this experience shaped you?
- Have there been ensuing personal benefits or costs to you because of this transition?

Looking ahead: In Unit II, you will be transitioning this story into a different genre: podcast, digital storytelling, artwork, etc. You will tell the same personal narrative maintaining the same purpose for your audience, but with a different construction. Make sure to select a story you are willing to explore at length, critique, and transition to other formats.