

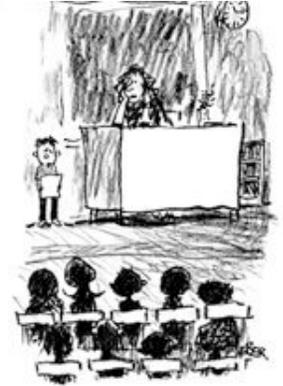
# Personal Narrative Essay

Rough Draft Due: **Friday, September 23**

Final Draft Due: **Tuesday, September 27**

Your assignment is to write a narrative essay illustrating a **pivotal**\* event in your life. The event you describe should take place at a **specific** moment in time, and – depending on how narrow you want your focus to be – the time period covered may range from just a few seconds to a whole day. If the event takes place over a longer period of time (for example, a two-week canoe trip or a class you took in middle school), focus instead on a highlight (or lowlight). Possible topics include:

- ❖ a “first”: when you first realized you had a special skill, ambition, or problem, when you first felt needed or rejected, when you first became aware of some kind of injustice or other important issue
- ❖ a memorably difficult situation: when you had to make a tough choice, when you were let down or you let someone else down, when you struggled to learn or understand something
- ❖ an occasion when things did not turn out as expected
- ❖ an incident that challenged your basic values or beliefs
- ❖ a humorous event, perhaps one that was embarrassing at the time, but that you can laugh about now
- ❖ an event that shaped you in a particular way, making you more independent, insecure, proud, courageous, determined, etc.
- ❖ an incident charged with strong emotions such as love, fear, guilt, anger, frustration, joy, etc.



*“For me, it all began one gray and chilly morning in the grim maternity ward of a borderline hospital on the Upper West Side.”*

## Narrative elements to consider:

- Setting** - Will the reader understand when and where the action is taking place?
- Character** - How do you want the reader to perceive you? What are some characteristics about you (and other characters in the narrative) that you want the reader to understand? Have you effectively described your characters' behavior in order to convey these points?
- Plot** - Have you established the plot by a causal linking of events? In other words, does one event lead to another?
- Conflict** - Consider both interior and exterior conflict.
- Theme** - Is there a dominant idea expressed in the story? Did you learn something from the event? Have you articulated it clearly in your thesis and developed it in the body of your essay?
- Tone, Mood, and Voice** - How do you want your reader to feel? Will readers be able to share your reactions to the experience you are recreating? Have you used vivid descriptions (imagery), variety in syntax, and other rhetorical strategies and literary devices?

## Essay requirements:

- 3-5 paragraphs, including an introductory paragraph (with thesis), a body, and a conclusion
- concrete details and commentary in every body paragraph
- neatly typed in MLA format
- carefully proofread for spelling, punctuation, and grammar

## Supporting materials to be turned in with the final draft:

- rough draft with corrections
- completed story map of your narrative
- this handout (annotated for full credit)

You may staple or binder-clip supporting materials to your final draft, or place everything together in a folder.

The final draft of the essay is worth 100 points, and supporting materials are worth a total of 50 points. To receive full credit, all materials must be turned in by the final draft due date. (*Late work will be accepted for partial credit for up to five days after the due date.*)

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\* **pivotal** (adjective) - of crucial importance in relation to the development or success of something