

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY
ENGLISH 125.068

DUE DATES:

Rough draft: Monday, September 29th. Bring 5 copies to class.
Final: Monday, October 6th. Bring 2 copies to class, along with your personal reflection, rough draft, and peer reviewer comments.

FORMAT:

5 pages, 12pt Times New Roman, double spaced, one inch margins, stapled.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Construct a narrative which tells a story from your life, and which contains an implicit argument or point. The essay you write will do two things simultaneously. Your first goal is to tell a compelling story that people will want to read. You should write to evoke a vivid world, populated with compelling characters. Your second goal is less obvious: your story should contain an implicit argument. It should illustrate a point. If, for example, you're writing about how sexism drove you off your high school field hockey team, your story is implicitly arguing (perhaps among other things) that such sexism is still very real. The challenge here is to have use of these aspects in concert: the story illustrates an argument, and the argument augments the story's narrative force. Together, they make your narrative more than a mere recounting of events. Do not let your story wander without an argument, and do not let that argument reduce the story to a philippic.

I strongly recommend that your essay tell only one story. When building a narrative which argues a point, it is tempting to include multiple vignettes for the sake of evidence. Resist this urge – it often deprives the piece of any narrative force and leaves it reading more like a catalogue than a story. It will be extremely difficult to complete this assignment successfully should that happen. Focus is key.

This paper will be graded on the success of the narrative and of the argument, both as separate components and as a working team. I want real stories, not academic exercises.

A WORD ABOUT THE PERSONAL REFLECTION:

When you turn in the final version of this essay to me, you will hand in two copies. Attached to one of those copies you will include a personal reflection of at least one page in length, which observes all of the format rules stated above. In this reflection, I want you to examine the work you've done on this paper. Questions you may address include:

1. What went well? What was difficult?
2. What did you like about this assignment? What did you find distasteful?
3. What do you feel you accomplished, and what do you feel you didn't do to your satisfaction?
4. What questions do you want me to make sure I address in my written comments?

Though you are welcome to, you need not raise all of these questions in your reflection. The point here is to give you a chance to reflect on the process of generating this work, and to communicate those reflections to me.