

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY PROMPT

Description

In a personal essay, a writer describes a particular experience in an effort to illustrate the importance of the event's impact. Personal essays do more than just share a narrative; they relate the details of a specific event in an effort to demonstrate meaning that goes beyond the story itself. The meaning should matter or be instructive to both the writer and the audience. A personal essay is written in the first person (using "I").

Why is this particular event important to you? How did it change your view of the world? And what can we, as readers, learn from your experience? You should not address these questions explicitly in a "tacked-on" piece of reflection at the end of the essay, but they should be an organic part of the essay. In a good personal essay, the writer's point is embedded in the narrative itself. Another feature of a personal essay is the use well-chosen, concrete details that show meaning rather than telling about it.

Assignment

Write a personal essay about that in some way responds to one or more of the following prompts:

1. Looking back, I wonder why I did that...
2. A time I didn't feel like myself...
3. A meditation on an image or object...
4. A dangerous moment...
5. A time I transformed an oppressive situation...

Instructions

Describe the event as if you were telling a story, using specific detail and dialogue when appropriate. Two approaches to this assignment that have worked for students in the past include appealing to your audience's sense of pathos.

Guidelines

Successful drafts should:

- Follow a clear narrative pattern (chronological, flashbacks, etc.)
- Focus on one central event
- Maintain a clear central focus (either explicit or implied)
- Include realistic dialogue
- Include vivid, descriptive details

Format

- Typed and double spaced with one inch margins
- 2-3 pages in 12 point font in Times New Roman
- MLA format