

## **Assignment: Writing a Personal Narrative**

For this essay you will need to write about one specific experience that changed how you acted, thought, or felt. Use your experience as a spring board for reflection. Your purpose is not to merely tell an interesting story but to show your readers the importance and influence the experience has had on you.

Good stories occur everywhere and can be told about anything. They are as likely to occur in your own neighborhood as in some exotic location. Potential stories happen daily; what makes potential stories actual stories is putting them into language, recounting them, orally or in writing. Good stories are entertaining, informative, lively, and believable; they will mean something to those who write them as well as to those who read them.

All stories account for something that happened—an event or series of events, after which something or somebody is changed. As in a fictional story, your personal essay will contain the similar elements: a character (who?) to whom something happens (what?), in some place (where?), at some time (when?), for some reason (why?), told from a particular perspective (how?).

**Narratives provide human interest, spark our curiosity, and draw us close to the storyteller. In addition, narratives can do the following:**

- Create a sense of shared history, linking people together.
- Provide entertainment. Most people enjoy a thrilling movie or an intriguing book.
- Provide psychological healing. Reading or listening to the narrative of someone who faced a life crisis similar to one you are experiencing can help you through the crisis. They can also help the writer and/or reader deal with the crisis or a similar crisis. This is called **CATHARSIS**.
- Provide insight. Narratives can help you discover values, explore options, and examine motives.

## **Possible Topics**

- The first time you did something on your own
- An accident
- The death of a loved one
- A sporting event
- A trip
- Trouble with your parents/police/teachers
- A fight
- Overcoming a fear
- A special person who has meant a lot to you
- A turning point in your life
- A “most time” (most embarrassing, frightening, amusing, exciting, satisfying, etc.)

## **Questions to ask yourself during and after writing an Autobiographical Incident**

1. Did I fully explain when, where, why, and how the incident happened?
2. Did I tell about my first reaction to the incident?
3. Did I explain how I feel about the incident now?
4. Is the story mainly about me, not somebody else?
5. Did I creatively describe the people and places involved?
6. Did I explain my feelings toward myself and other people/places?
7. Did I give it an interesting title?