

Personal Essay Assignment

ENG 3U

Having read a number of personal essays, including Donald Murray's "The Stranger is the Photo is Me," you will now be asked to write your own memoir of a time in your past. Like Murray, you will select a photo as a starting point for writing which you will include with your written submission (please write your name on the back).

Your task is to **evoke** the setting of the past as well as the person you were back then, rather than merely describing what is obviously apparent. In other words, "show, don't tell." Make your reader feel your experiences.

*Most importantly, regardless of how you choose to evoke the past, you must have a **central purpose**. This is not a standard essay—you are free to negotiate paragraph length and organizational methods. But you cannot compromise your purpose. What is the message that you wish to convey to your reader? Your thesis may be implicit, but the purpose must be clear.*

Your message does not have to be serious or too reflective. It certainly can be, but being too serious is not a requirement of this assignment.

Writing the Memoir

To begin this assignment, start by gathering together photos of your life that reflect moments that were either very important to you in a positive, or very important to you in a negative way. Talk to other members of your family to get ideas to help you remember events from when you were small, and to fill in the details that might have been forgotten. Select a photo representing the event, or series of related events, that seems most interesting to you right now. Brainstorm again but in more detail, trying to recall names, places, descriptions, voices, conversations, things, and all the other details that will make this turning into an interesting personal essay. Work at this note-taking stage for a few days, until you feel you've got it all down on paper. Then, you begin to write.

Once you start to write, don't worry about organization. Try to keep your purpose in mind, but do not worry if it does not seem completely clear at this point. Just keep writing until your experience has been fully explained.

Then, you'll edit. And when you edit this is the chance to clarify your purpose. At this point, you can re-organize your paragraphs, add stylistic evidence, more carefully appeal to your audience and, if you would like, embellish some of the details.

Exemplar Essay

An exemplar has been provided for you here. Use it to see the kind of work that is expected for this kind of mark.

Specific Essay Requirements

- A central purpose
- Must be 3-5 pages in length (double spaced)
- Follow correct MLA format
- Use of each of the three appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)
- Use of at least three rhetorical or stylistic devices
- You are required to submit all rough/process work (hand written brainstorming + one typed copy that has been edited by hand)

Due Dates

In-class Brainstorming: _____

Rough Copy for Peer Editing: _____

Good Copy: _____