

The Memoir Assignment

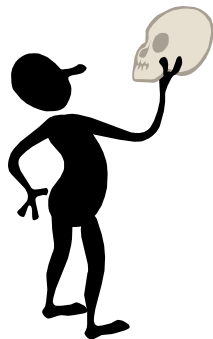
“The next thing most like living one’s life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.”
— Benjamin Franklin

Significant Memory

This is a memory which must have affected you, your life, or your personality. The memory may also have changed the way you viewed something or someone. Overall, this memory must have meaning in **your** life.

Definition of a Memoir

Writers look for the past and make sense of it. Writers figure out who they are, who they have become, and what it means to them and to the lives of others. A memoir puts the events of a life in perspective for the writer and for those who read it. It is a way to explain to others the events of our lives — our choices, perspectives, decisions, and responses.



Topics

For this assignment, you have 3 choices:

(1) Write a personal memoir that evokes some significant message or theme that you want your reader to understand about you and your life. Choose an event or series of events that illustrate and explore tensions you encountered. Identify a complication or struggle of values. Then show how you evaluated the complication and resolved it. End your memoir by telling your readers what you learned from this experience.

(2) Write a memoir in which you explore your relationship with another member of your family. Choose an event or series of events that could illustrate

that relationship and explore its tensions. Identify a complication or struggle of values. Then show how you and this other family member evaluated the complication and resolved it. End your memoir by telling your readers what you learned from this experience.

(3) Write a memoir or “story” that has been told so often in your family that it has become “famous.” Briefly, tell the story. Then explain why that story is a favorite. Here are some brainstorming questions. Please write an organized essay. **DO NOT** simply write a list of answers to these questions. End your memoir by telling your readers how this story has affected your own life.

- a. What does it mean to those who tell it?
- b. Does it mean the same thing for everyone involved?
- c. When is it told?
- d. What purpose does it serve?
- e. What point does it make about your family—what is its significance?

Your Memoir Must:

- Be about you and be the TRUTH.
- Be 2-3 pages in length, typed, single-spaced, size 12 font, 1” margins all around
- Have a creative, catchy, original title
- Have an exciting beginning that draws the reader in. Start in an interesting place and hook your reader in the first sentence. You can use action, a vivid description, or dialogue, for instance.
- Be written in first person (“I”)
- Explain the memory in detail and be told in logical order
- Use vivid, detailed description full of imagery
- Include some dialogue
- Include a short reflection paragraph that reflects on the memory and explains to the reader why this is significant. By the end of the story, the message, or “SO WHAT?” should be clear: the reader should know why you wrote this and what he/she is supposed to learn from it.

Of course, you will not remember every detail or conversation exactly as it happened. As a memoirist, you are allowed to recreate the scene as best as you can remember, filling in the smaller details. Try to capture the feeling of that moment. Don’t worry about having everything historically correct. But most importantly, remember this rule about writing your memoirs: **HAVE FUN!** 😊