**10 Honors Personal Narrative Essay Assignment**

*We have been studying how authors develop context, setting, conflict, and characterization. We have studied how structure and organization within a narrative (and within a paragraph) can be used to enhance a story. We have also studied how authors use diction, sensory details, figurative language, dialogue, italics, parallel structure, and syntax as storytelling tools. So, now it’s your turn.*

**Assignment:** Write about an autobiographical incident. Stretch your skill as a writer by trying out some of the techniques we have studied through our mentor texts. (100 points Writing Grade)

* Leaves the reader with a lesson or emotional connection
* Includes use of narrative techniques, such as imagery, hyperbole, juxtaposition, irony, symbolism, pun, diction (to influence tone), syntax (such as simple sentences, listing, and parallel structure for effect)

**Audience:** your teacher and your classmates

**Length:** no shorter than a full page but no longer than the works we have read -- preferably keep it at two pages max. As always, paper should be in MLA format (double spaced).

**What to write about?**

**Write about a memory:** your best or worst school experience, a time when you succeeded (or failed) and the lesson you learned, something that has shaped you or that defines your identity, a safe haven, where you consider home, a family member or friend who has had a significant impact on you, an event or experience that changed your perspective on something . . . the list continues of possibilities.

**How to write it?**

**Once you have your main message (purpose for writing), think about how you will structure the essay and what techniques you will use to tell your story.** You want to show and not tell. In other words, don’t just talk about it. You may approach your narrative using a traditional structure of introduction, body, and conclusion, or if you are brave and want to experiment (like Sherman Alexie), you may create your own; however, both the structure and the techniques used need to complement the narrative. Use the pre-writing organizer on the back of this handout as your first step in the drafting process.

**When is it due?**

**Rough draft: Due Friday, February 15th** at the beginning of the period. We will have class time to work on the rough draft during the week of February 11th-15th.

\*\*We will use that class period as a peer review day and talk about ways to make our essays better. Be prepared with rough draft in hand so that you can receive feedback.

**Final draft due by 7:45 am on Tuesday, February 26th** to Turnitin.

Tips for writing a personal narrative

**Audience/Purpose:**  Personal narratives allow you to share your life and insight with others. Your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action allowing him or her to live vicariously through the experience. A good story has a dramatic effect- makes us laugh, makes us cry, makes us sit on the edge of our seat in anticipation. Make your audience feel what you felt.

**Show, Don’t Tell:** Don’t simply tell the reader details or how you felt. Allow the reader to see, hear, feel, and taste the experience directly. Be clever with what you say explicitly and don’t be afraid to imply certain elements of your story. Select revealing details. One way to move away from telling and towards showing is to limit your use of “to be” verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been).

**Let People Talk** Carefully constructed dialogue can often tell us more than simple narration. Work to create dialogue that that allows character’s personalities and voices to emerge through unique word selection and the use of active rather than passive voice. Consider Amy Tan’s limited use of dialogue and Alexie Sherman’s choice of traditionally punctuated dialogue versus his use of italics.

**Tense** Consider how present vs. past tense might influence your message and overall tone.

**Tone** The tone of your narrative should set up the overall feeling. Your choice of details and diction will ultimately affect your tone. How do you want your audience to feel while they are reading your piece? Careful word choice can help achieve the appropriate effect.

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| **Personal Narrative Prewriting**  One of the goals of your personal narrative is to leave the reader with an emotional connection to the story/text. In order to do this, your writing needs to be descriptive, specific, and intentional. Complete this chart as a first step in the drafting process. | |
| Imagery: objects you can see when you remember this person/event, colors you remember, sounds you associate with the memory, Smells or tastes, etc. | |
| Emotions that you (or others) felt | Lessons learned: What did you learn about yourself?  What lesson did you learn about life in general?  How did you change as a result? |
| Literary devices you plan to use | Strong specific verbs that describe the action |
| Structural options (flashback? in medias res? chronological? reflection?) | Syntax elements you hope to use (simple sentence for effect, listing, parallel structure, etc.) |