Personal Narrative: Rite of Passage

When you write a narrative essay, you are telling a story from your point of view so there is feeling as well as specific and often sensory details provided to get the reader involved in the elements and sequence of the story. Include all the conventions of storytelling: plot, character, setting, climax, and ending. Fill it with details that are carefully selected to explain, support, or embellish the story. Above all, this story must contain conflict. This can be either internal or external. In the rite of passage story, these conflicts are generally internal.

Remember: The Rite of Passage is essentially transforming from a younger innocent self to a new more experienced self. It is an experience that causes you to learn something about the world around you that you were once naïve to.

This narrative

- Is told from a particular point of view
- Is non-fiction—but it can be slightly embellished
- Makes and supports a point
- Is filled with precise detail
- Uses active verbs and vivid modifiers
- Uses conflict and sequence as does any story
- Must use dialogue
- Shows your learning

First steps for writing a narrative essay:

1. Identify the experience that you want to write about.
2. Think about why the experience is significant.
3. Spend a good deal of time drafting your recollections about the details of the experience.
4. Create an outline of the basic parts of your narrative.

Writing about the experience:

1. Using your outline, describe each part of your narrative.
2. Rather than telling your readers what happened, use vivid details and descriptions to actually recreate the experience for your readers.
3. Think like your readers. Try to remember that the information you present is the only information your readers have about the experiences.
4. Always keep in mind that all of the small and seemingly unimportant details known to you are not necessarily known to your readers.
5. Find a generalization, which the story supports. This is the only way the writer’s personal experience will take on meaning for readers. This generalization does not have to encompass humanity as a whole; it can concern the writer, men, women, or children of various ages and backgrounds.
6. Narratives are generally written in the first person, that is, using I.
7. Narratives, as stories, should include these story conventions: a plot, including setting and characters; a climax; and an ending.
Communicating the significance of the experience:

It's often effective to begin your narrative with a paragraph that introduces the experience and communicates the significance. This technique guarantees that your readers will understand the significance of the experience as they progress through the narrative.

Another effective technique is to begin the essay by jumping directly into the narrative and then ending the essay with a paragraph communicating the significance of the experience. This approach allows your readers to develop their own understanding of the experience through the body of the essay and then more deeply connect to your expression of the significance at the end.

You might also consider introducing the experience in the first paragraph but delaying your expression of the significance of the experience until the end of the essay. This approach heightens your readers' sensitivity to the significance of the narrative.

Prompts

1. **Childhood Memory**: Pick a special time from your childhood and tell about the events that make it memorable. It could be
   
   1. A birthday party
   2. The first day of kindergarten
   3. A remarkable holiday
   4. Meeting your best friend

2. **A Momentous Event**: Your first goal or sonata, a sleep-over, gaining or losing a pet, a friend, a family member- these are the times that make us who we are: tell about an experience that deeply affected you.

3. **An Unforgettable Day**: For better or worse, we all have days that will never fade from our memories. Pick a day that still stands out in your mind and write out the events of those twenty-four hours.

4. **Ah-Ha!**: Have you ever worked really hard at something, thinking you’d never get it, then, suddenly gotten it? Think about a time you learned a new trick, skill, or concept, and write about the process of “getting it”.

5. **My Scar**: Almost everybody has a scar, and most scars come with stories of their own. Write about your scar and how you got it.

6. **I Wish I Had Been More Open…**: Most of us can look back on opportunities we lost because we were shy, or afraid we’d look stupid, or didn’t want to fail. Try to remember a specific time when being more adventurous might have been to your advantage.

7. **Unjustly Accused**: Can you remember a time when a teacher, your friends, or your parents believed you had done something of which you were innocent? Tell the story of the misunderstanding and what finally happened.

8. **It Takes Guts** to stand up for what you believe in. Have you ever had to go against the crowd? Have you had to stick with an unpopular position or belief just because it was the right thing to do? What happened?

9. **A Silver Lining**: Often something that happens to us seems bad at the time, but appears later to have been a good thing, after all. Tell the story of a time an apparently negative event turned out for the best.
10. **A childhood event.** Think of an experience when you learned something for the first time, or when you realized how important someone was for you.

11. **Achieving a goal.** Think about a particularly meaningful achievement in your life. This could be something as seemingly minor as achieving a good grade on a difficult assignment, or this could be something with more long-lasting effects, like getting the job you desired or getting into the best school to which you applied.

12. **A failure.** Think about a time when you did not perform as well as you had wanted. Focusing on an experience like this can result in rewarding reflections about the positive emerging from the negative.

13. **A good or bad deed.** Think about a time when you did or did not stand up for yourself or someone else in the face of adversity or challenge.

14. **A change in your life.** Think about a time when something significant changed in your life. This could be anything from a move across town to a major change in a relationship to the birth or death of a loved one.

15. **A realization.** Think about a time when you experienced a realization. This could be anything from understanding a complicated math equation to gaining a deeper understanding of a philosophical issue or life situation.

This Narrative should be at least 2 pages in length.

**Rough Draft:** Due Friday, November 14th

**Final Draft:** Due Friday, November 21st