

Essay 2—Autobiographical Narrative

Write a two page (500-600 words) story about a significant incident in your life using the literary strategies of plot, character, and setting. Develop your story through the use of contraries, creating tension that moves the story forward and gives it significance. You can discuss the significance of your story explicitly, as a revelation perhaps, or you can imply it. Use specific details and develop contraries that create tension.

Here are three kinds of **contraries** that frequently form the plots of autobiographical narratives:

Old self versus new self. The writer changes as a result of some transforming moment or event.

Old view of another person versus new view of another person. The writer's perception of a person (a favorite uncle, a friend, a childhood hero) changes because of a revealing moment; this change also indicates a growth in the narrator's self-perception.

Old values versus new values. The writer confronts an outsider who threatens, challenges, or otherwise disrupts his or her world view, or the writer undergoes a crisis that creates a conflict of values.

Your essay should depict a series of connected events that create a sense of tension or conflict for the reader that leads to a new understanding.

Here is a possible structure for the **plot** of your narrative:

- An arresting opening scene
- Introduction of characters and filling in of background and setting
- Building tension or conflict through oppositions embedded in a series of events or scenes
- Climax or pivotal moment when the tension or conflict comes to a head
- Reflection on the events of the plot and their meaning

Your **characters** should either contribute directly to the tension or conflict or represent some aspect of that tension with special clarity. The characters might exemplify the narrator's fears and desires, or they might frustrate or aid the narrator's growth in a significant way.

The **setting** should help readers to understand the conflict or tension that drives the story. What a narrator notices in the external world should reflect inner moods and conflicts.

Write your presentation in classic prose style: clear and concise, specific and engaging.

Make every word count.

Initial Draft Due: February 20
(Bring THREE copies of your essay to class.)

Revised Draft Due: March 6
(Bring your Revised Draft, your Initial Draft with my comments on it, and all the Peer Critiques you received to class in a folder.)