

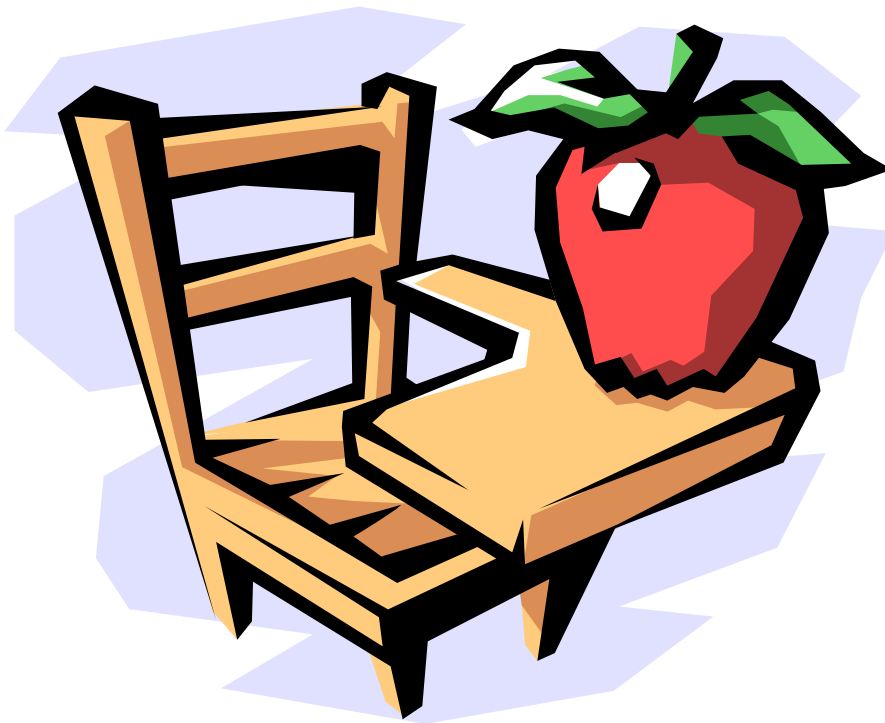
“EDUCATION IS A SOCIAL PROCESS . . .

EDUCATION IS GROWTH . . .

EDUCATION IS, NOT A PREPARATION FOR LIFE; EDUCATION IS LIFE

ITSELF”

John Dewey



## THE *PERSONAL* PERSONAL ESSAY

By Jennifer M. Groth

## Rationale

As parents, teachers, and/or administrators, we value the right of the individual students to learn and grow in the classroom. We yearn for our students to succeed in the world, knowing who they are and what they believe in. What better way to learn these incredibly important things than through education? Whether it be the school of life or the school in your community, the student needs and deserves to know these not-so-basic things about themselves.

Growing up in today's society is tough. Parents, teachers, and administrators have the very difficult job of helping the children of today to become the leaders of tomorrow. Before they are able to take this kind of responsibility, however, they must know themselves. The Personal Essay assists with this transformation. Many times when sitting down to an essay assignment, students will experience "writer's block." After talking with several high school students I have come to the conclusion that this occurs not when they are talking about themselves or their environments, but rather when they are writing about things that are beyond their immediate control. Yes, I feel topics such as nuclear warfare and gun control should be discussed, but not exclusively. The Personal Essay gives the student the opportunity to delve deeper into themselves, into their own important issues. When a student sits to write about him or herself, he/she will become more in tune with what is being written. It has an immediacy that we cannot create within other topics. At that moment, when the student is writing about his/her own life, issues, concerns, and solutions they are not only fulfilling an assignment. They are not only researching something because they have to. They are not just going through the motions. At that moment, the student is learning something valuable. He/she is learning

what issues there are in his/her life, concerns that have, as of yet, been unnoticed or unmentioned, and solutions to problems that were never known to exist. What better way to prepare students for the future they are about to enter into? What better way to teach the student how to become an independent thinker, problem solver, and solver of world problems?

In this unit plan, I hope to instill in students a love of learning, but, more importantly, a love of learning about themselves. Students need to know that all of the ‘important’ issues do not reside outside of themselves. They are important people with legitimate concerns. They are the ones who are going to inherit the world and all of its problems someday. It is our job as parent, teacher, or administrator to prepare them for that responsibility morally, ethically, and intellectually. I believe that the personal essay has the potential to do just that.

### Introduction

“Every man has three characters – that which he exhibits, that which he has, and that which he thinks he has.” Alphonse Karr

By the completion of this unit, the students will have learned much about themselves as students, peers, in relationships to those outside the school, and, most importantly, about their true selves. The unit will be a journey through figuring out who they think they are, who they present themselves to be, and who they actually are. This is very important as these can, hypothetically, be three different people. The students will learn this through the creation of personal and reflective essays, the use of peer response, and through portfolio assessment.

During this unit the students will be learning how to present themselves as an entire entity by submitting a portfolio for assessment rather than the standard testing

scheme which usually tests what kind of day the student has had, how much time he/she has had to study and how much the student can reiterate. By using portfolio assessment both teacher and student benefit from receiving an overall assessment of quantity and quality of learning which has taken place.

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Defining the Personal Essay

Objective: Students will learn how to identify a personal essay on his/her journey to writing one.

Lesson #1

Content:

A personal essay includes aspects of experience from every part of a student's life. It explores ideas, often that the student hasn't even considered before. This type of essay tends to bring out more questions in response to the new thoughts, causing the student to delve deeper into the essence of the matter. The personal essay is an exploratory experience in which the author tends to not know the outcome of the writing.

Classroom Activities:

1. Hand out journals for each student to free write. Students are allowed to write anything school-appropriate in their journals. These will be kept confidential from other students, however, these journals will be read and responded to by the teacher. These journals are part of the portfolio grade. If any inappropriate material or material pertaining to things the teacher is required to report to school officials, the journal will be turned over to the appropriate authorities. Students are allowed to write at any point that free time is given. Students are responsible for any missed journal entries. At some times students will be given prompts, at others, they may free write. The prompts are used to lead the student to a topic for their final papers and should, therefore, be taken seriously. Explain that in doing this type of writing, he/she will more than likely employ many strategies of the Personal essay.
2. **Journal Entry 1** - Ask students to write down two conflicts in their lives at this moment. These do not have to be Earth shattering, but important to them. After they have completed this, have them free write for ten minutes about one.
3. As an exercise in how to write effectively, I will ask the student to look at the last sentence and see if it has anything to do with the first. Explain that in most effective writing the first sentence is the "attention getter" sentence which is elaborated in the paragraph, leading to the thesis statement.
4. Have students mark a passage that they have never thought of before. Discuss how this is a good way to show how writing a personal essay involves creating new ideas.
5. Have students highlight passages that involve "I" as well as other personal experiences. These types of things often imply that the author is trying to solve a problem.
6. Have students break into groups and give each group an essay of reminiscence, personal essay, or essay of experience. Have them write down the qualities of the essay they read. What are some of the aspects of the essay? What makes these essays different from the ones they read in their science, poetry, or history books?

7. Discuss Nussbaum Handouts on Reminiscence, Personal Essay, and Essay of Experience. What are the differences between these types of essays? Why are these differences important? How does each of these types of essays affect the reader differently? Why? Teacher will write student-given answers on board in columns under each type of essay title.
8. Pass out Visions Across the Americas. Explain that this book has many different essays written by influential people in the Americas. This book can be used to aid students in understanding the differences in the essays and the importance of those differences.

Evaluation:

For homework, students will be given three essays. They will be required to read each of the essays and identify each as a reminiscence, personal essay, or essay of experience bringing with them specific examples. These texts will be discussed during the next class to ensure all students understand the aspects of a personal essay.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, highlighters, Nussbaum Handouts, essays  
Students – pencil, notebook, folder for handouts, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Types of Essays and Conventions

Objective: Students will be able to categorize types of writing, giving the conventions used as evidence of this assessment.

Lesson #2

Student Preparation:

Students will need to bring essays identified as reminiscence, personal essay, or essay of experience with examples to support their assertions. Also, student will need folder with handouts collected thus far. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

An analogy is something being explained in the terms of something else. “Love is like a red, red rose” is an example of analogy. A narrative personal essay relates a dramatic story or a series of events to explore an idea. A reflective personal essay uses a particular event to investigate an idea.

Classroom Activities:

1. Discuss homework. What were the essays and what were the conventions that led you to that conclusion? What are some of the conventions of the personal essay? Are all of these conventions necessary to make such an essay?
2. Discuss analogy, narrative, and reflective essay components.
  - Analogy: compare two like events to two unlike events to show how the former are similar.
  - Narrative: detail a series of events in order to discuss an idea.
  - Reflective: Write about one event, reflecting on the impact it has had on the student in order to reach some sort of conclusion about the event.
3. Give examples on overhead and have class identify the types of essays, telling the rest of us what lead them to that conclusion.
4. Discuss assignment for personal essay (due in one week). Discuss what is expected and the way in which it will be graded (Peer Review). This assignment will be included in the students’ final portfolios which will be bound and on display in the English Office as well as online. Assignment is one of the three types of essays on the Nussbaum Handout.
5. Use past examples of student essays and/or writing from other sources and “grade” them in class on overhead. Then, pass out excerpts and have each student assess them, giving them a number from one to ten. Ten being the best. Go over these excerpts in class, sharing attributes and deficits of the excerpts. When the class is within three of the number-grade you assigned the excerpt, they are ready for Peer Review.
6. **Journal Entry 2** - Brainstorm essay ideas for about five minutes
7. Begin a rough draft to be collected in four class-times.

Evaluation:

Evaluation will take place during the classroom identification of the types of essays as well as their identification of homework essays.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, Nussbaum Handouts, essays, overhead projector, essay assignment handout, excerpts from previous student essays

Students – pencil, notebook, folder for handouts, homework, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Using different types of essays

Objective: Accessing their prior knowledge, students will be able to write about their topic using two of the three types of personal essay styles.

Lesson #3

Student Preparation:

Students will be given a few minutes at the beginning of class to look over prior class' notes. Students will need to have folder with handouts collected thus far. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

Discuss with students the three types of essays and have students write the definitions on the chalkboard. Explain that these are distinctly different essays, but all include things such as an introduction, thesis statement, conclusion, feelings, and detail.

Classroom Activities:

1. Ask students to look over their notes from the previous class.
2. Write the following on the board: Analogy, Narrative, Reflective. Have the students write the definitions of each on the board.
  - Analogy: compare two like events to two unlike events to show how the former are similar.
  - Narrative: detail a series of events in order to discuss an idea.
  - Reflective: Write about one event, reflecting on the impact it has had on the student in order to reach some sort of conclusion about the event.
3. Discuss the three types again if there is any confusion.
4. **Journal Entry 3** - Assign students to take their topics from the previous class and write a paragraph in two of the three styles of personal essay. Teacher must be available to help those in need.
5. Have students volunteer to read their paragraphs orally without telling us what type of essay it is. The rest of the class must determine what types the paragraphs were and discuss specific examples of why they thought it was that type.
6. Class discussion on the components of an essay: introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion.

Evaluation:

During the discussions of the types of essays and the determination of types, the teacher will be able to determine if learning is taking place. If the students are correctly identifying the types of essays, the class can move on to writing papers. If not, teacher-lead review is necessary.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Writing an organized essay

Objective: Given the definition of the personal essay, students will be able to write a coherent personal essay that effectively employs the five conventions of a personal essay: introduction, conclusion, thesis, relating feelings, and detail.

Lesson #4

Student Preparation:

Students will be given time to look over previous class' notes while attendance is being taken. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

Teacher will bring in examples of papers with strong and weak introductions, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Go over the "Checklist for an Organized Personal Essay." Have the students decide which of these is "good" and "bad." Have them write in their journals about which of the essays was the best and which was the worst, giving specific examples including the title, author, and page number of the essay. This will get them to pay attention to details that will be included in future research papers. Class discussion on their conclusions.

Classroom Activities:

1. Review introductions, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
2. Introduce the "Checklist for an Organized Personal Essay." (handout)
  - a. Does the writer have an introduction? Is it effective?
  - b. Does the paper have a conclusion? Does it make sense of the entirety of the paper? Does it leave things unsaid?
  - c. Is the content of the essay believable? Does the author use enough detail to support his/her ideas? Put a checkmark in the margin where more detail would enhance the paper.
  - d. What is the main point of this paper? Is it easy to tell or are there several ideas going at once?
  - e. Did the writer talk about the feelings he/she was experiencing during the plot of the essay? Put an "x" where more feeling would enhance the paper.
  - f. Write three things the author did really well. Be very specific when telling why these were exemplary.
  - g. Write three suggestions for revision. Again, be specific when identifying points at which improvements could be made.
3. On overhead projector, show students strong and weak introductions, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Discuss what makes each of these strong or weak. Ask for suggestions students would give the author for improvement. Also, ask students what the author did well.
4. **Journal Entry 4** - Students will write in their journals about the essays on the overhead and determine which of these was the best, giving specific examples

including the title, author, and page number of the essay. This will get them to pay attention to details that will be included in future research papers.

5. Discuss class findings.
6. Continue working on rough draft due next class-time. Students will be required to bring one copy with their name on it and one copy without their name on it.
7. Have students sign up for conference dates and times. These will take place before or after school, during lunch, or during homeroom.
8. Advise that there will be a thorough in-class writing assignment next class-time over the conventions of personal essays.

Evaluation:

Again, evaluation will be done during class discussion of the sample essays presented. The journal entry will also be a valuable tool in assessing the learning taking place.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, Checklist for Organized Personal Essay Handout, Overhead Projector, overhead films of essay examples with intro, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions, Signup sheet for conferences

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: The value of Peer Review and Writer's Memo

Objective: By using prior knowledge of language, students will be able to give valuable Peer response, including both praise and constructive criticism. Each student will be able to create a Writer's Memo for the assignment and see the value in its use.

Lesson #5

Student Preparation:

Students will be required to bring two copies of rough draft, one with name and one without name. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

Discuss with students the idea of audience and how we would write differently for different audiences. As writers, it is valuable to know your audience in order to more effectively convey the message you are sending through your writing. Introduce the writer's memo as a solution to the problem of not knowing your audience, as well as its value in being able to lead the reader in the response you wish to receive.

Classroom Activities:

1. Teacher will read aloud a paper directed at a group that excludes the majority of the class. This could be scientists, teachers, people from a different area of the world, etc. Ask the students what they think. How do they feel? Do they think the essay was directed at them? How do they know? Etc. . .
2. Discuss how this essay could have been written to include the students as members of the audience. Write responses on the chalkboard, making sure that diction and tone are included in the list.
3. Discuss the suggestions made by the class. Why and how are these important to the author getting the message across?
4. Introduce the Writer's Memo as part of the assignment of any paper from this point forward.
  - Writer's Memo must include
    - a. brief summary of the writing process thus far
    - b. detailed description of intended audience
    - c. favorite part of the essay
    - d. least favorite part of the essay
    - e. at least three pointed questions the writer has that the reader must respond to
    - f. how the writer wishes to receive response from the reader
5. Introduce Peer Response. Discuss the value of learning from your peers, as these are always part of your audience. Ask class to make a list, on the chalkboard, of benefits and fears of Peer Response. Address each one individually.

Evaluation:

This day in the classroom is evaluated on participation, value of discussion, and engagement of each student.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement, paper that excludes majority of students

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Effectiveness of the Personal Essay

Objective: Having written and read numerous personal essays, students will be able to determine whether some conventions are necessary. These findings will be submitted in the form of a three to five page in-class writing assignment.

Lesson #6

Student Preparation:

Students will be given five minutes at the beginning of class to look over notes. Personal essays are due at this time with Writer's Memo. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

We have been head deep in personal essays for an entire week. We have looked at the general appearance as well as the detail of these essays. The students will now have the chance to synthesize all of this information of what is considered "necessary" to an essay into a three to five page paper on the importance of these conventions.

This paper will include the lasting impression of a personal essay and whether there may be a better way to get a point across to an audience.

Classroom Activities:

1. Collect Personal Essays
2. Give the assignment for the reflective essay. Discuss the conventions deemed "necessary" to the essay and whether or not they are truly necessary. Furthermore, determine the effectiveness of a personal essay. Detail its attributes and detriments. Is it a lasting impression? Why or why not?
3. Collect Reflective Essay

Evaluation:

Evaluation will take the form of assessing the essays completed during this class-time. This will show the depth of thought and involvement the students possess that has been necessary to this unit.

Conferences will begin after school today and end after school in two days. The final draft will then be due during Lesson #10.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Personal Essays, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: The Value of Peer Review

Objective: Students will be able to read and make suggestions for improvement of another student's writing. The review will build rapport between class members and teach them that they are valuable to one another.

Lesson Plan #7

Student Preparation:

Students will be given time to look over previous class' notes while attendance is being taken. Visions Across the Americas

Content: Having collected and looked over the personal essays handed in during Lesson #6, teacher will pass out the papers without student names on them to the class to peer review. Each student will assign the paper a number as was done during Lesson #2 and will respond as per the guidelines set forth during Lesson #4.

Classroom Activities:

1. Teacher will pass out personal essays without student names, discussing the importance of anonymity among the writers. Students will be given approximately twenty minutes to read and respond to the essays. When completed, the students will turn the essays upside down on the desk in the front of the room with responses in a separate pile next to them. The responses must include the title of the paper responded to at the top and the responder's name at the bottom.
2. After the first round of responses is complete, the teacher will again pass out the essays, making sure that no student gets his her own paper or the same paper responded to in the first round. The students will again be given approximately twenty minutes to read and respond.
3. Teacher will collect all essays and responses. If any time is remaining, students can read freely while teacher hands out graded reflective essays.
4. Students will be instructed to come to the room at the end of the day or during homeroom to pick up their essays with teacher comments as well as their peer reviews.
5. Instruct students to bring either Reflective or Personal Essay, without names, to class the next day for a special project.

Evaluation:

Evaluation will take place within the peer response activity. The teacher will randomly read the evaluations handed in by peer respondents to ensure the quality of the responses during the Peer Review. All responses will be assessed and included in the overall grade for the course.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement, nameless essays, graded essays

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Multi-Sensory Learning

Objective: Students will learn how to transfer thoughts into images, thereby learning the value of different methods of response.

Lesson #8

Student Preparation:

Students will be given time to look over previous class' notes while attendance is being taken. Students should bring nameless copy of either Reflective Essay or Personal Essay. Visions Across the Americas

Content:

Students will be making posters of the essay of their choice that will be turned in as part of the portfolio assessment. The required components of the portfolio will be listed on the chalkboard.

Classroom Activities:

1. **Journal Entry 5** - Have students write for five to ten minutes about the Peer Review Workshop in their Journals.
2. Have students read their essays that they brought to class. Then, tell them that they will be making a poster, using a regular size piece of paper, of their essay. No words can be on the posters, only images. Explain that these are to be kept to themselves, as they will be part of the students' final evaluation. These are due at the end of the class period.
3. Give the rest of the class period to work on posters.
4. Collect posters and essays without names.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated by the amount of effort, creativity, and engagement they show while doing posters. The expectation of confidentiality will also be included if needed.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement, nameless essays of student's choice, computer paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Multi-Sensory Learning

Objective: Students will learn how to transfer thoughts into images, thereby learning the value of different methods of response.

Lesson #9

Student Preparation:

Students are given time to think about last class time's activity while attendance is taken. Visions Across the Americas

Classroom Activities:

1. Pass out essays to students, having them read them immediately.
2. Have students make a poster about the essay that they read, just as they did their own during the previous class period. Remind the students that these, too, will be part of their portfolio assessment. These are due at the end of the class period.
3. Remainder of class is given to making posters. If time remains, go over list of required components of portfolio due next class period.
  - Personal Essay first draft with Writer's Memo
  - Personal Essay Revised Final Essay with Writer's Memo
  - Reflective Essay first draft with Writer's Memo
  - Reflective Essay Peer responses
  - Reflective Essay Final Essay with Writer's Memo
  - Essay with poster by author and peer
  - Final Paper
  - Journal Entries 1-5
  - Peer Responses written to others

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated by the amount of effort, creativity, and engagement they show while doing posters. The expectation of confidentiality will also be included if needed.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ markerboard with appropriate writing implement, nameless essays of student's choice, computer paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, Visions Across the Americas

Unit: Personal Essay

Concept: Final Examination

Objective: Students will be able to assess writing through visual representation.

Lesson #10

Student Preparation: Students will be turning in their portfolios.

Content: Students will be able to assess their writing through different mediums than the standard essay.

Classroom Activities:

1. Collect All components of portfolio with the exception of the two posters and final essay.
2. Students will be given the posters they made in response to the essay of their choice, the essay, and the poster made by their peer. They will then assess why they made their poster the way they did, why their peer made the poster the way they did, compare the similarities and differences, and account for them. For example, why did they draw a boy with freckles as the prominent figure in their poster and the peer poster had a dog as the most prominent feature of the poster? What part of the essay would have informed these differing images?
3. Collect posters and essays.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated through portfolio assessment that is collected on this day.

Materials Needed:

Teacher – Journal for each student, chalkboard/ marker-board with appropriate writing implement, nameless essays, computer paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons

Students – pencil, notebook, folder with handouts collected thus far, nameless essay of student's choice, Visions Across the Americas

Sharing life experiences defines *personal writing*. It is the type of writing with you, the writer, at the center. As you write, expect to gain some insight into your life—past, present, and future.

## Reminiscence

What have been the defining experiences of your life? What specific events have made a difference to you?

Collect by brainstorming, clustering, free writing

Focus on details. See the event through the lens of a camera.

What did you say?

What did you hear?

What did you wear?

How did you react?

Recreate the time and place to make it come alive for the reader.

**Remember: *Action + Reaction***

## Personal Essay

Explore your "stomach growls." This essay is more reflective, philosophical.

Consider an earlier time of your life: a time of change, joy, or pain. Choose something that interests you, amuses you, angers you, or makes you think.

Share strong feelings you have about some aspect of your life.

Dig as deep as you can into your experience.

Impel the readers to think about their own lives.

## Essay of Experience

Reflect on a pivotal time and place in your life. The focal point is the change and the experience brought about.

What are the experiences that have changed your attitude about people, places, and long held beliefs? You are looking for a life-changing experience.

Make sure your subject can pass this before and after test:

Before this experience, I was \_\_\_\_\_,

but after this time, I was \_\_\_\_\_.

Experiment with different starting points for your essay: establishing background, describing the setting, jumping into the action.

# Pre-Writing: Personal Writing

## Reminiscence

List experiences in each category:

Events:

Places:

People:

Objects:

Free-write about a particular memory to remember details and explore possible meanings. If you're having trouble generating a subject, consider a cross-generational relationship or an experience that increased or hindered self-confidence.

## Personal

List what you consider to be strong feelings:

Connect these feelings with different experiences (events, people, places, objects).  
Free-write to explore those feelings: I've been frustrated (or angry or joyful) because. . . .

## Experience

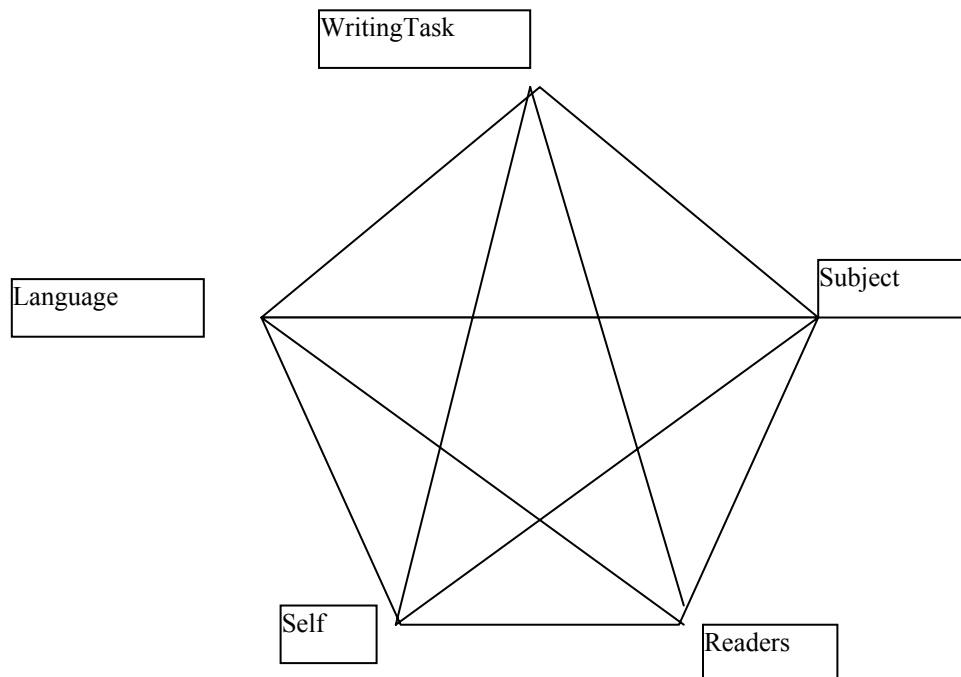
Consider experiences that have expanded your horizons, broadened your world-view.

Free-write in response to one of the following prompts:

*I should have known better when . . .*

*Before I was . . . , but now I am . . .*

*The first time that I really understood . . .*



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Reflection \_\_\_\_\_

### Reflective Questions

Why did you select this subject for your personal writing?

Who's the audience for this paper? (no somebodies, anybodies, people who are interested in family, etc.; be precise)

What is the paper's purpose, the effect you want to have on the audience?

In what ways did you gather ideas for this paper?

What changes did you make from draft to revision?

How did these changes improve your essay?

What was the hardest thing for you to do as you drafted and revised the paper?

What do you like best about your revised work?

What would you continue to work on if you had more time?

What did you learn from writing this paper—about your writing process and/or your topic?

## Advanced Composition Personal WRITING EVALUATION

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Paper Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ DEVELOPMENT (50%)

**Content:** *The paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.*

- Main ideas, details, anecdotes, and examples are **carefully selected**.
- Ideas, details, and examples are **thought provoking**.
- The reader is not left with important, unanswered questions; the writer **anticipates questions** that may occur to the reader.
- Choice of main ideas and corresponding details leave a **vivid impression** on the reader.
- Ideas, details, anecdotes, and examples **transcend what is obvious**.
- Writing demonstrates an understanding of selecting **material that is significant**.

**Organization:** *The organization enhances and showcases the central theme or idea. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.*

- An **inviting introduction** draws the reader in.
- A thesis, either stated or implied, is strong and clear and provides a **focal point** for the rest of the paper.
- **Thoughtful, creative, and appropriate transitions** between sentences and thoughts clearly show how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.
- The text demonstrates a **balance** among the ideas
- The creation of paragraphs is **purposeful and logical**
- **Pacing is well controlled:** The writer knows when to slow down and elaborate and when to pick up the pace and move on.
- Organization **flows so smoothly** the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the **purpose and audience**.
- A **satisfying conclusion** leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.

\_\_\_\_\_ STYLE / RHETORICAL STRATEGY (25%)

**Voice:** *The writer speaks to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness of and respect for the purpose of the writing.*

- The tone of the writing **adds interest** to the message.

**Word Choice:** *Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.*

- **Words are specific and accurate.** It is easy to understand just what the writer means.
- **Lively verbs** add energy while **specific nouns and modifiers** add depth.
- **Striking words and phrases** often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind. Figurative language, if used, reinforces the message. The figurative language does not interrupt, distract, or sound forced.
- **Precision** is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot. **Words are selected for their connotations and associations**, not just their denotations.

**Sentence Fluency:** *The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.*

- Sentences are constructed in a way that **underscores and enhances meaning**.
- Sentences **vary in length** as well as **structure**. The writer has used **brush strokes** to enhance the writing.
- **Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings** add variety and energy.
- The writing has a **cadence**; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning.

\_\_\_\_\_ CONVENTIONS (25%)

The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.

- *Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.*
  - *Homonyms are in the correct form.*
  - *Plurals and possessives are used correctly.*
- *Capitalization is consistent and uppercases all first words, initials, proper names and adjectives, and follows formal title rules.*
- *Grammar and usage are research appropriate.*
  - *Fragments and/or run-on are not used without justification.*
  - *Pronoun/antecedent references are accurate/*
  - *Pronouns are not ambiguous.*
  - *Modifying phrases are not misplaced or dangling.*
  - *Verb tense is consistent, shifting only when appropriate.*
- *Punctuation is accurate and guides the reader through the text.*
- *The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions.*

## Works Cited

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