

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Narrative Essay

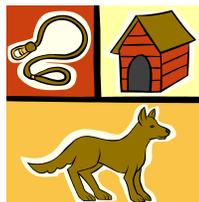
Mrs. Zavacky  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade English

A personal narrative is a writing in which the central character is...you! In a narrative, you recall an event or an experience that has already taken place in your life. Select an experience that has had a significant effect on you. It should be something about which you can write a **three paragraph essay**. It should also be an experience that provoked a lot of thoughts and feelings in you. You should be able to answer the following questions about your topic. What effect did this experience have on you? What did you learn from this experience? Did it make you grow and mature emotionally? How did it change you? **It can be a positive experience or a negative experience. Most important, it should be an emotional experience** or one that caused you to think and feel. Take the time to think and brainstorm a topic that is meaningful to you.

Examples:

a birth – for example a new sibling  
a fire  
a robbery  
a special relationship with any person  
a sickness or a hospital stay  
a divorce and/or remarriage and step family experience  
being lost  
a car accident or accident of any kind  
moving (new home, new town, new school, new friends, etc.)  
a fear and/or overcoming a fear  
an experience with peer pressure  
a bullying or teasing experience  
a handicap, physical challenge, or learning disability  
an award or recognition for a special talent  
a travel experience that involves a new country and culture ("regular" vacations are not an option; I will explain why)  
staying back in school  
a school or church experience and/or activity  
a death of a loved one or pet

Other Ideas:



We will use **The Writing Process** to write this essay one step at a time.

## Prewriting

We brainstormed many topics for this writing assignment in class, but you may still have other ideas for your topic. **It is important that you write about something significant to you.** Do not worry what others have chosen for a topic. Parents will be helpful in making suggestions and recalling exact details, too.

### 1. Select a topic.

### 2. Use the prewriting notes organizer to arrange your ideas as follows:

a. List all of the details of the experience.

- Use **the 5 W's** to develop the important details.

**When** did this experience take place? **Where? Who** was involved?

**What** happened? **Why** did it happen? **How** did it change you? **What** did you learn?

b. Arrange the details in **chronological order**. (Time order) Tell what happened first, next, after that, etc. Use time transitions.

c. Recall your **thoughts and feelings** as you were living the experience.

d. Brainstorm **specific, descriptive word choices** to narrate the experience and to communicate your thoughts and feelings.

## Drafting

Develop an excellent essay by writing **three paragraphs** as follows:

### Introductory Paragraph (Five or more sentences)

1. **Catch the reader's attention** with an interesting opening sentence or two.
2. **Give a little background.** Set the scene, but do not begin telling the story yet. Try to create a mood.
3. **Introduce your topic and the main idea** you want to communicate about your topic. (Was it scary? emotional? painful? life altering? etc.)
4. **Include the answers to who, when, and where.** Tell how old you were, what grade you were in, where you were living, etc.
5. **Lead in** to telling what happened, but don't tell the story. End this paragraph with a cliffhanger, perhaps, which will make the reader want to know more.

## Body Paragraph

1. **Tell your story.** Explain what happened.
2. Tell it in the order in which it happened. **Use chronological order.** Guide the reader through the experience.
3. Use **“time” transition words and phrases** to develop the sense of time and to connect ideas.
4. Be sure to **include your thoughts and feelings** as you tell the story.
5. Try to **use specific nouns, vivid action verbs, and descriptive adjectives and adverbs** in describing the experience and your thoughts and feelings. **Make the experience come alive.** Paint pictures in the reader’s mind. Make us think and feel as you did.

## Concluding Paragraph

Conclude your writing with a paragraph that summarizes your thoughts and feelings about the experience. This is a very important paragraph! It leaves the reader with the final impression of your experience and your writing. Begin with a strong topic sentence that states your main idea about the experience. Include comments on the following questions to show why and how this experience was important in your life:

**Why did this happen? (You may not know)**

**How did it change you?**

**Does it continue to have an effect on you?**

**Why was it an important experience in your life?**

**What did you learn from this experience?**

**How has it helped you grow and mature?**

***Work hard on this paragraph. It is important that you end your essay strongly!***

## Revising and Editing

1. Read your essay to yourself. Read it silently, and then **read it aloud.** Edit all sentences and paragraphs to be sure they tell the story in the order in which it happened, and they communicate your ideas about the importance of this experience in your life. **Edit for your vocabulary choices, verb tense agreement, and time transitions.**
2. **Read your story aloud to someone else** to get more feedback.
3. **Edit for the focus correction areas.**
4. **Use the revising and editing checklists.**

## Publishing

**Follow all manuscript rules** to publish a final copy that is your personal best effort.

**Writing from personal experience is what writers do best. This assignment gives you the opportunity to write a very personal, meaningful essay. Put forth your best effort and come for help if you need it.**

## **Focus Correction Areas**

- 1. Use of manuscript rules**
- 2. Introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs written as suggested**
- 3. Use of transition words and phrases**
- 4. Verb tense agreement**
- 5. Appropriate sentence structure – No run-ons, fragments, or awkward sentence structures**
- 6. Excellent word choices – no slang, use specific nouns, vivid verbs, and descriptive adjectives and adverbs**
- 7. Accurate spelling**
- 8. Evidence of the writing process (notes, drafts, and revisions)**

### **Time Line:**

**Prewriting Organizer and signature– Due: \_\_\_\_\_**

**1<sup>st</sup> paragraph (handwritten or typed) – Due \_\_\_\_\_**

**Final two paragraphs (handwritten or typed) – \_\_\_\_\_**

**Typed draft of narrative – \_\_\_\_\_**

**Final Copy – Due: \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Please do not cut this handout**

**I have read the guidelines and will put my best efforts into my narrative.**

**Topic: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**I approve of the topic that my child has chosen for his/her personal narrative.**

**Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**