

Essay #1: Personal Narrative

A **personal narrative** is a form of autobiographical writing whereby the author relates an experience in order to convey a lesson or personal insight to readers.

For this assignment, **you must write a 3-4 page (typed, double-spaced) personal narrative that focuses on a memorable or transforming experience you had in your neighborhood** (Fort Greene, Coney Island, Chinatown, etc.). This incident could be an emotional experience, a silly or serious event, or a frightening encounter. Be sure to include enough specific details to make the incident come alive for your readers. **Through your narrative, readers should vividly become familiar with the characteristics of your neighborhood, and how your neighborhood has helped to shape your identity.** Like the essays we read in class, you should present a unique perspective that combines memories and vivid descriptions.

Due date: Wednesday, October 3, 2018

Tips/Reminders:

- **Hook your reader** with a strong opening, such as starting in the middle of the action, using dialogue, sharing a character's thoughts/feelings, etc. to pull readers in
- **Show, Don't Tell** – don't *tell* the reader what he or she is supposed to think or feel. Let the reader see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the experience directly, and let the sensory experiences lead him or her to your intended thought or feeling. For instance, rather than telling us, "My brother is incredibly funny," show us by sharing something he said (dialogue) that allows readers to judge for themselves just how funny your brother is.
- **Convey a particular feeling or mood** through your narrative. Decide on whether you want to surprise your readers, make them laugh, have them share in your sorrow or fear, etc.
- **Use dialogue** to bring the character(s) and the experience to life
- **Remember your audience** – your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action, letting him or her live through your experience. You've done your job effectively if the readers can say, for example, "Yes, that captures what living in Fort Greene feels like," or "Yes, that's exactly what it feels like to ride the Cyclone in Coney Island."
- **Title your work** – give your personal narrative a representative title that captures the essence of the story
- **Format your paper** according to the guidelines explained on the course syllabus under "Formatting papers"