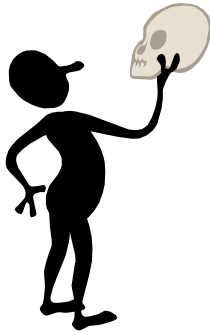


The Memoir Assignment

“The next thing most like living one’s life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.”
— Benjamin Franklin

Significant Memory

Throughout the semester, we will brainstorm, identify and write about memories that are most important to you. At the conclusion of each book we read, you will choose one memory to write a memoir that is somehow related to what we’ve read. This memory must have affected you, your life, or your personality. The memory may also have changed the way you viewed something or someone. Overall, this memory must have meaning in your life.



Definition of a Memoir

Writers look for the past and make sense of it. Writers figure out who they are, who they have become, and what it means to them and to the lives of others. A memoir puts the events of a life in perspective for the writer and for those who read it. It is a way to explain to others the events of our lives — our choices, perspectives, decisions, and responses.

Topics

Good times, bad times, any experience of growing up. It could include a day at the beach with your grandfather, a particular game or concert, the day your parents told you about their divorce, a birth of a brother or sister, a vacation, or playground memories in elementary school. Memoirs call for a good story, for problems, and themes, for humor, and detail. The writer edits his or her life for the reader.

The only requirement for the topic is that your memoir should be somehow related to what our books are about: think about the themes we’ve discussed in class, and base the subject of your memoir on one of those particular topics.

Your Memoir Must:

- Be 2-3 pages in length
- Be typed, double-spaced, with size 12 font, 1” margins all around
- Have a creative, catchy, original title
- Have an exciting beginning that draws the reader in. Start in an interesting place and hook your reader in the first sentence. You can use action, a vivid description, or dialogue, for instance.
- Be written in first person (“I”)
- Explain the memory in detail and be told in logical order
- Use vivid, detailed description full of imagery
- Include some dialogue
- Include a short reflection paragraph that reflects on the memory and explains to the reader why this is significant. By the end of the story, the message, or “SO WHAT?” should be clear: the reader should know why you wrote this and what he/she is supposed to learn from it.

Of course, you will not remember every detail or conversation exactly as it happened. As a memoirist, you are allowed to recreate the scene as best as you can remember, filling in the smaller details. Try to capture the feeling of that moment. Don’t worry about having everything historically correct. But most importantly, remember this rule about writing your memoirs: HAVE FUN! ☺