

Professor Fevronia K. Soumakis
ENG 101- College Writing I
Spring 2023

Essay #1 The Memoir Essay Assignment Guidelines

Brainstorming work: Feb 1
Thesis/Outline due: Feb 8
Draft due: Feb 15
Final Essay due: Feb 22

For this assignment, recall a time when a person or event taught you something about yourself, something that you could not fully understand until now. Write a memoir (at least 2 ½ -3 pages) that describes the person and/or narrates the event. Include vivid details that would allow your reader to experience your memoir fully. Be sure to make clear what significance the person or event had on your life.

Focus:

Write about one, specific thing that has been important to you such as: a person, place, experience, event, day, moment, relationship, etc. It does not have to be earthshaking; indeed, it may involve a quiet moment that only you see as important — a brief encounter with a remarkable person, a visit to a special place, a memorable achievement (or failure), something that makes you laugh whenever you think about it. Writing about events that happened at least a few years ago is often easier than writing about recent events because you can more easily step back and see those events with a clear perspective. To choose the event that you will write about, consider how well you can recall what happened, how interesting it will be to readers, and whether you wish to share it with an audience.

After finding a focal point that interests you, find a use of language — either written or spoken or both — that is involved in the story.

Choose a focal point which was also a turning point: how did this person or event help make you who you are now? What were you like before, and after?

Consider the Rhetorical Situation:

Purpose	What is the importance of the memory you are trying to convey? How will this story help your readers (and you yourself) understand you, as you were then and as you are now?
Audience	Who are your readers? What do you want them to think of you after reading your memoir? How can you help them understand your experience? Personal topics are stories you feel comfortable telling in public. Private topics are stories you do not

want to share in public. Do not write a story for this class that leaves you feeling highly embarrassed, panicked, scared, or so on. You may need or want to write about that topic, but not in public.

Stance What impression do you want to give, and how can your words contribute to that impression? What tone do you want to project? Sincere? Serious? Humorous? Detached? Self-critical?

Structuring the Memoir:

Just as a research paper has an introduction, body, and conclusion, you might find it easiest to have a "before" section (introduction), a detailed story, and an "after" section that reflects on the story and concludes. You are free, however, to jump right into the story and explain the background later; to use flashbacks and flash forwards and to use other techniques of fiction.

Regarding organization, consider the following:

You can organize by time: what happened in chronological order.

You can organize by space: a story about each different room in a house, for instance.

You can organize other ways: a list of the meanings a thing had for me, with a story about each one, for instance.

Finally, make sure you include both narration (the story itself), and reflection (your thoughts and feelings about the story). Reflection helps readers find personal connections to your story — you can use this section to answer the eternal question that is said to often haunt writing: "so what?" or in the case of a memoir "Why is this significant?"

Formatting:

Include a creative title

Margins: 1 inch on all sides

Font size/type: 12-point New Times Roman

Double-spaced with page numbers in upper right-hand corner with student's last name

Evaluation:

I will be evaluating you on several elements including the following:

- The sharpness of the details you use to evoke the experience
- The thoughtfulness with which you reflect on the experience
- The grace of your language
- The mechanical correctness of your prose