



How to intrigue your reader....

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY WRITING & ESSAYS STARTERS

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY WRITING

For this assignment, you will need to narrate an event that happened to you. Here are some suggestions:

- + A turning point in your life. This could be a time when you had to take responsibility for something, a time when you had to face a difficult challenge, a time when you learned to do something new, etc.
- + A time when a person (or group of people) had an impact on your life. This may be a time when you encountered someone different from yourself, a time someone taught you something, etc.
- + An adventure that tested you in some way. This may be a job you have had, a trip you took, a time when you and your friends did something different, etc.
- + A photograph of a meaningful and significant event. Tell the story behind the picture.

AS YOU WRITE YOUR ESSAY MAKE SURE THAT YOU APPLY THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE WRITING:

- ✘ identify the point of the narrative conflict (the problem or issue)
- ✘ develop only those details that advance the narrative point (the snapshot details)
- ✘ organize the narrative sequence
 - + chronologically
 - + flashback
 - + flash-forward
- ✘ make the narrative easy to follow/ well organized
- ✘ make the narrative vigorous and immediate
 - + description
 - + active verbs
 - + dialogue
- ✘ keep verb tense and point of view consistent
 - + Choose either present, past, or future tense
 - + Choose either first, second, or third person

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

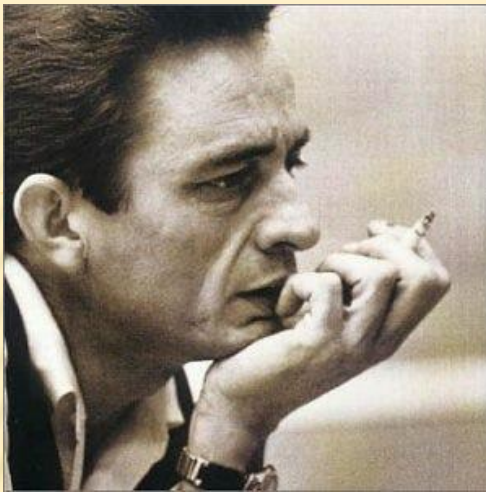
I will look at papers in terms of:

- ✘ What did you set out to do?
- ✘ Did you do that?
- ✘ Have you given your reader enough information to support yourself?

Papers are written to explain:

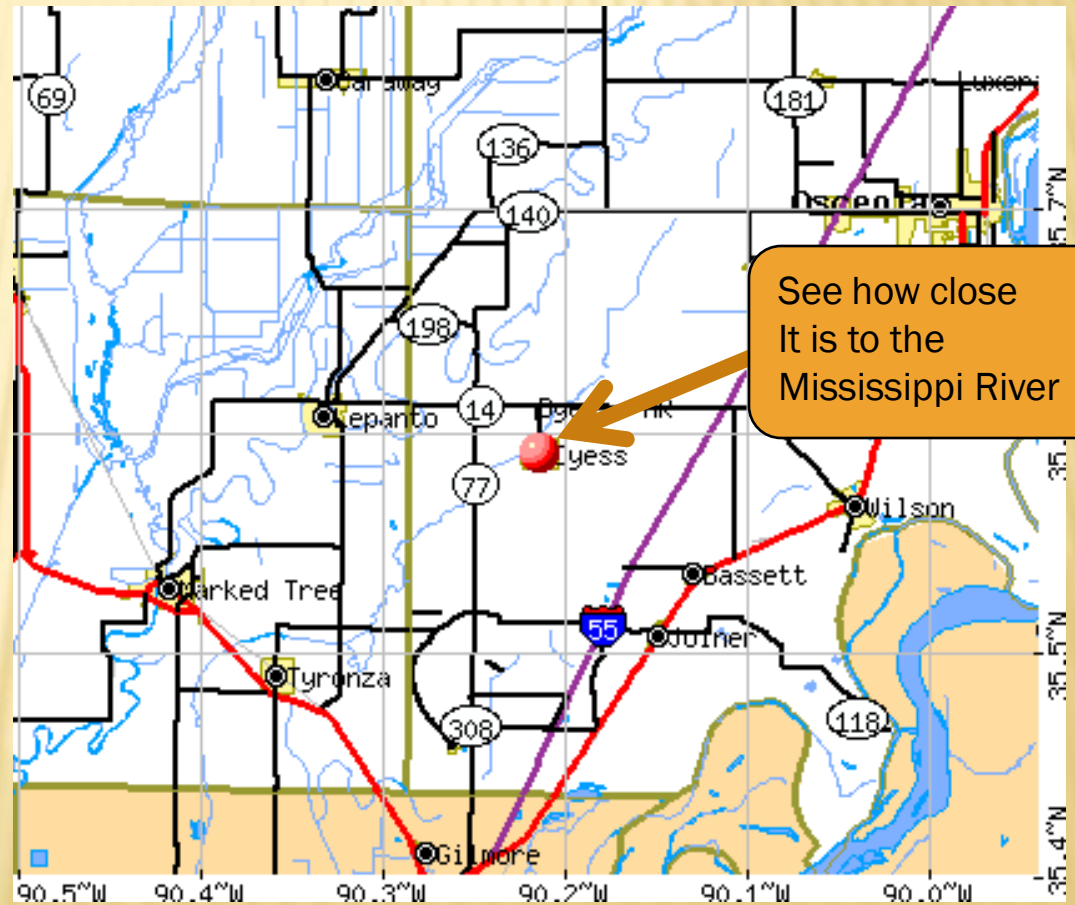
- ✘ Why should anyone care about this?
- ✘ You work to convince someone else that it matters and that it matters in a particular way.





JOHNNY CASH – PERSONAL NARRATIVE

- ✘ Johnny Cash grew up in a small farming town in Arkansas named Dyess.
- ✘ His music frequently reflected his life experiences.



JOHNNY CASH – PERSONAL NARRATIVE

- ✘ Watch the video clip of Johnny Cash in concert performing his song “**Five Feet High and Rising**”.
- ✘ In this song, he sings about an event that occurred during his childhood.
- ✘ You will then work with a partner to analyze the lyrics, looking specifically for elements of personal narrative.
- ✘ Your response to the song can go in your reading response log.

[Johnny Cash "Two Feet High and Rising" in concert](#)

YOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVE

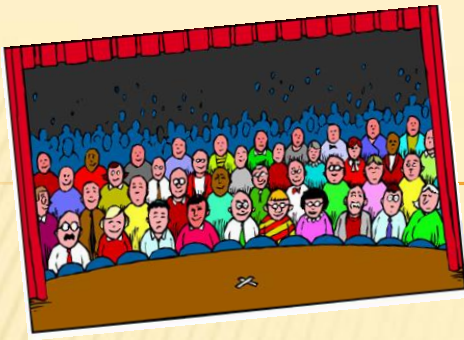
- ✘ You will now be using techniques like Cash used to develop your own personal narrative.
- ✘ First, let's recap what elements are included in personal narrative writing, and some writing tips.



CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE WRITING:



- ✘ Plot
- ✘ Conflict
- ✘ Characterization
- ✘ Setting
- ✘ Theme
- ✘ Point of View
- ✘ Sequencing/
Organization
- ✘ Transitions



TIPS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE:

✘ Purpose & Audience

Personal narratives allow you to share your life with others and vicariously experience the things that happen around you. Your job as a writer is to put the reader in the midst of the action letting him or her live through an experience. Although a great deal of writing has a thesis, stories are different. A good story creates a dramatic effect, makes us laugh, gives us pleasurable fright, and/or gets us on the edge of our seats. A story has done its job if we can say, "Yes, that captures what living with my father feels like," or "Yes, that's what being cut from the football team felt like."

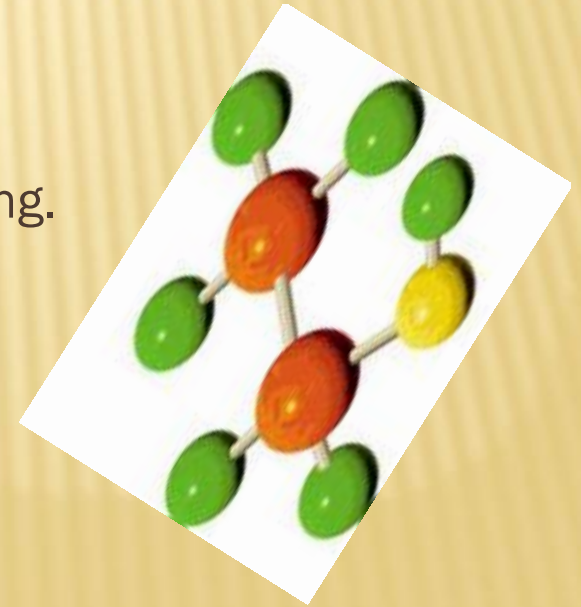
TIPS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE:

✘ Structure

There are a variety of ways to structure your narrative story. The three most common structures are:

- + chronological approach
- + flashback sequence
- + reflective mode (the choice bits and pieces)

Select one that best fits the story you are telling.

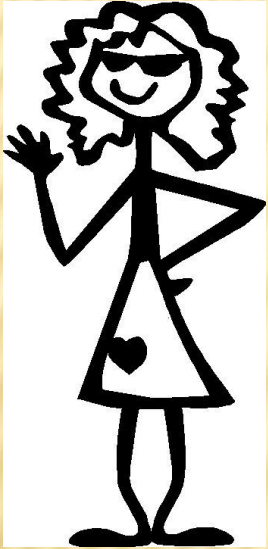


TIPS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE:

- + **Show, don't tell:** 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
- + **Let people talk:** It's amazing how much we learn about people from what they say. One way to achieve this is through carefully constructed dialogue.
- + **Choose a point of view:** Point of view is the perspective from which your story is told. It encompasses where you are in time, how much you view the experience emotionally (your tone), and how much you allow yourself into the minds of the characters.
- + **Tense:** Tense is determined by the structure you select for your narrative. Consider how present vs. past tense might influence your message and the overall tone of your piece.
- + **Tone:** The tone of your narrative should set up an overall feeling. Look over the subject that you are presenting and think of what you are trying to get across. Let the words you use create an overall feel.

PERSONAL/ NARRATIVE RECAP

- ✘ Instead of trying to tell the whole story, tell the “snapshot” version – details about a specific moment in time (be brief!)
- ✘ Carefully select the details you want to share with your reader (be choosy!)
- ✘ Make the piece clear, realistic, and well-organized
- ✘ Grab the reader’s attention with specific and vivid word choices, and a unique voice (be clever!)
- ✘ Make sure there is good organization – intro, details/conflict/action and conclusion



BEGIN PRE-WRITING

- ✗ First, you need to choose a meaningful event to write about.
- ✗ Here are some suggestions:
 - + A memorable wedding or funeral
 - + Your first day of school
 - + Your first day of a new job
 - + A disastrous date
 - + A moment of failure or success
 - + An encounter that changed your life
 - + An embarrassing experience
 - + A frightening experience
 - + A memorable journey
 - + An occasion when you experienced rejection
 - + A breakup of a friendship
 - + A rebellious act
 - + A brush with greatness
 - + A brush with death
 - + A time you took a stand on an important issue
 - + The day you decided to change your life

PRE-WRITING

- ✘ After you have chosen the experience you wish you write about:
 - + Draw a picture of that experience (or use a photograph)
 - + Recall how you felt during the event
 - + List sensory details (sights, sounds, smells, etc)
 - + Begin to organize your ideas – how will it all fit together.

Begin writing!

A few ways to look at it...

BASIC ESSAY STRUCTURE

Introduction:

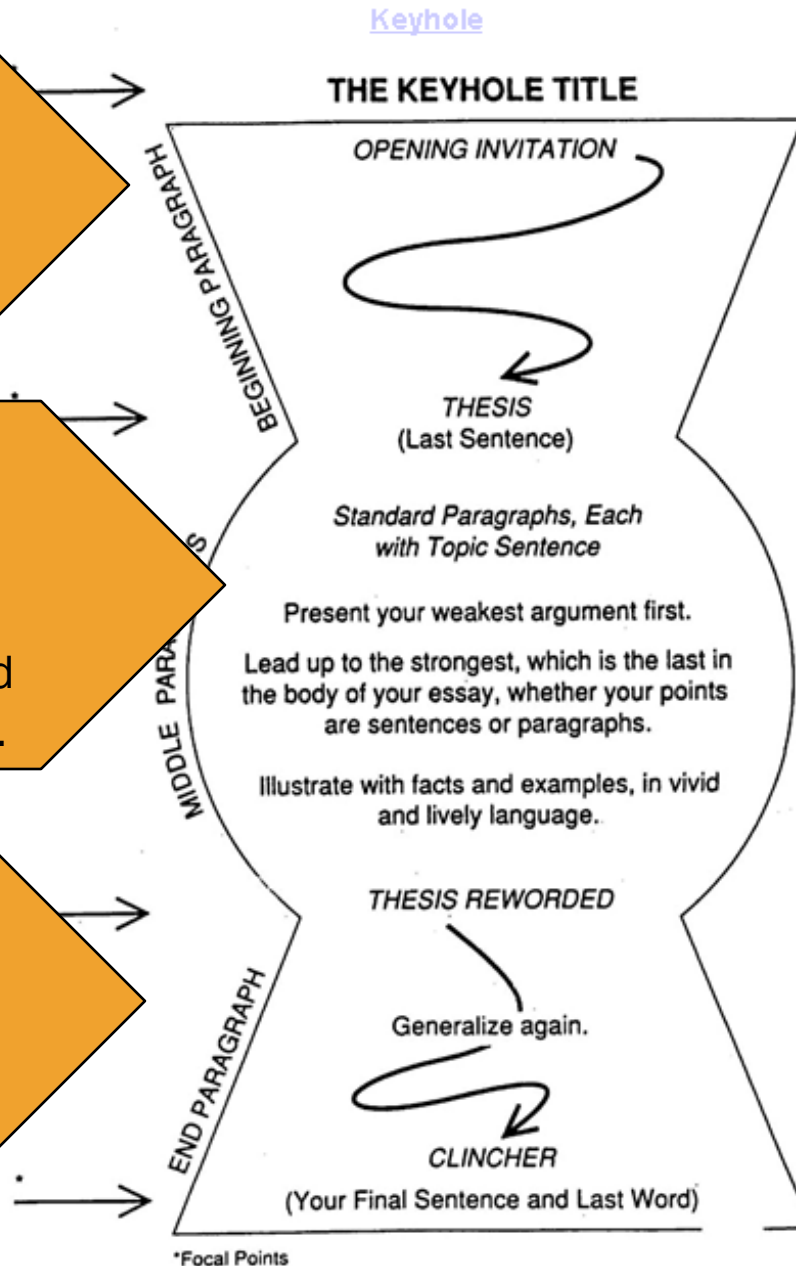
Starts broad and goes to more focused/
specific topic – has to grab your reader's attention

Body of Essay:

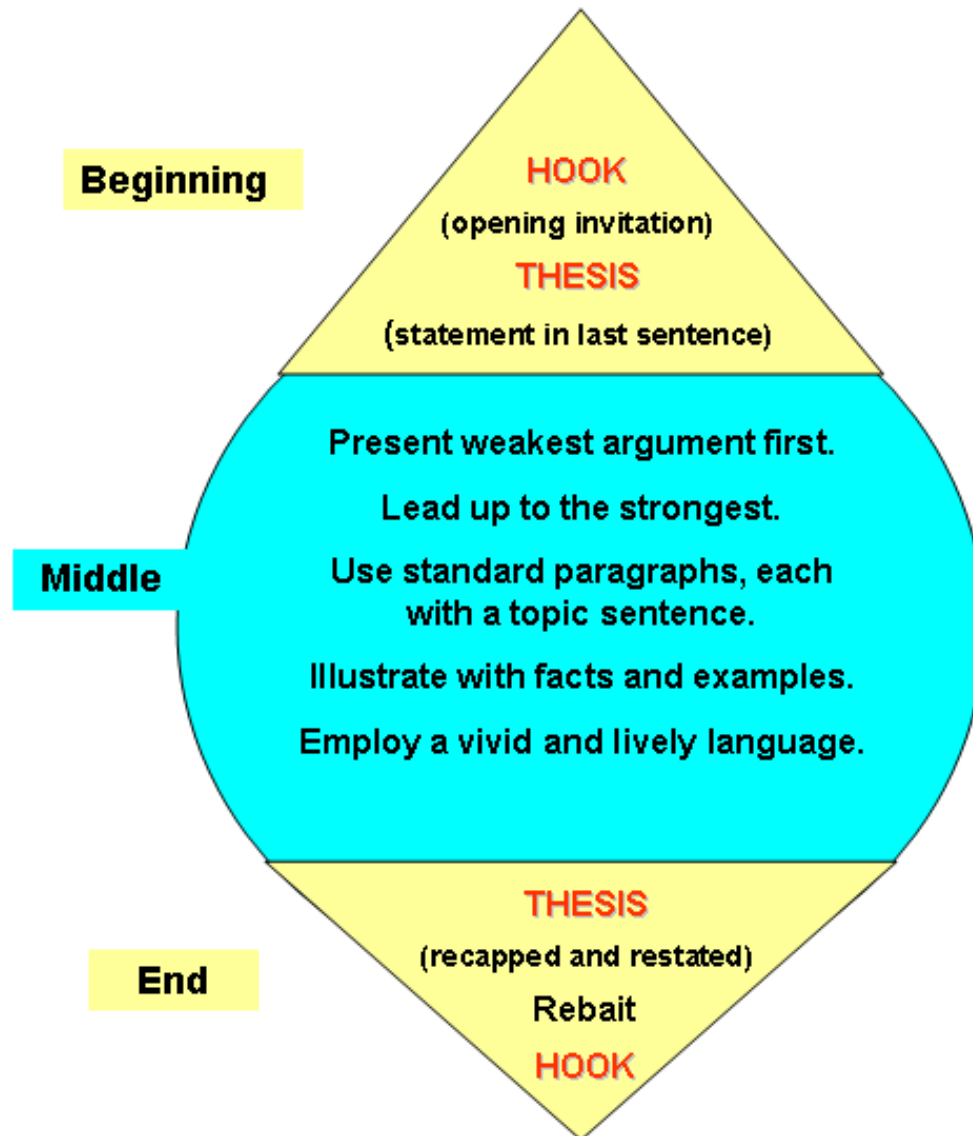
Paragraphs that include details and examples that support your topic. Remember to use PPE Method (Point, Proof and Explanation).

Conclusion:

Begins with specific topic, and expands to broader ideas – should leave your reader with a lasting impression, And sums up your ideas.



Essay Diagram



Thesis Statement

Topic
Sentence

Topic
Sentence

Topic
Sentence

Supporting
Details

Supporting
Details

Supporting
Details

Conclusion

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

- ✘ Choose one of the personal narrative samples and complete an analysis, in your reading response log.

- ✘ For the analysis, respond to the following questions:
 1. Did the writer use sensory details about a specific moment in time? Explain, using examples.
 2. Is it a good story, meaningful/significant? Did it maintain your interest? Explain.
 3. Which writing trait was achieved most strongly? Explain, using examples.
 4. Which writing trait was the weakest? Explain, using examples. Offer suggestions for how it could have been improved upon.
 5. What was the overall tone of the piece? Explain, using examples.

In your log, make sure to include: Article title and author, the date, & purpose of entry (analysis)

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY STARTERS

WARM-UP: WRITER'S NOTEBOOK ACTIVITY

- ✘ Good writing is all about connecting to your reader.
- ✘ One way to connect your reader to the text is by creating vivid images that your reader can visualize and relate to.
- ✘ One way to do this is to create descriptions that “show”, or put the reader right in the moment, rather than giving the reader descriptions that merely “tell”.

WARM-UP: WRITER'S NOTEBOOK ACTIVITY

- ✘ Show me, don't tell me...
- ✘ Often time, writers fall into the habit of telling a reader, but to engage the reader, make him feel like he is in the situation with you by vividly describing it.
- ✘ Don't just tell me – “**It was incredibly funny**” – instead show me with vivid, sensory details

WARM-UP: WRITER'S NOTEBOOK ACTIVITY

- ✘ Show me – “It was incredibly funny.”
- ✘ To help you get started, watch the following funny clip and then write a description of what is happening that would let a reader come to the conclusion that it was incredibly funny.
- ✘ Amazing Farting Baby
- ✘ Laughing Baby

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY – STARTING STRONG/WRITING CATCHY INTROS

- ✘ The introduction of an essay is probably one of the most essential parts, but it is usually one of the last things you write.
- ✘ You want to start your essay with a sentence that hooks your reader.
- ✘ **Catchy introductions are crucial because:**
 - + You never get a second chance to make a good first impression
 - + The introduction acts as the roadmap to the rest of your piece
 - + A catchy introduction will make a reader want to read the rest of the paper.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY – STARTING STRONG/WRITING CATCHY INTROS

- ✘ Open with an attention grabber:
 - + an intriguing example
 - + a quotation
 - + a vivid and unexpected anecdote (personal story) or putting us right in the middle of your story/ the action
 - + a thought-provoking question

CATCHY INTROS – INTRIGUING EXAMPLE

- ✘ Make your reader have to think about your topic
- ✘ Examples:
 - + A long time ago I heard the adage that it takes something like 43 muscles to frown but only 17 muscles to smile.
 - + Your brain generates 25 watts of power while you're awake—enough to illuminate a light bulb.
 - + 40 billion songs are downloaded illegally every year, that's some 90% of all music downloads.

CATCHY INTROS – QUOTATIONS

- ✘ Intrigue your reader by using a thought-provoking quotation that hints at the topic or lesson in your paper.
- ✘ Examples:
 - + “Life is not measured by the breaths you take, but the moments that take your breath away.”
 - + “Live well; laugh often; love much.”
 - + “Wise people learn when they can; fools learn when they must.” (Arthur Wellesley)
 - + “Wisely, and slow. They stumble that run fast.” (Shakespeare)

CATCHY INTROS – VIVID ANECDOTE

- ✘ Offering a snapshot glimpse at a personal moment will intrigue a reader to want to know more about you. Put us right in the moment with you.
- ✘ Example:
 - + I could hear the buzz of voices as I walked up the stairs to the function room. A glance at my watch showed that it had already been in progress for about forty minutes. I figured about two hours would see me out; then I could escape....

CATCHY INTROS – THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION

- ✘ Asking a question forces your reader to contemplate it
- ✘ Examples:
 - + Do you have any regrets in life?
 - + Would you give your life to save someone else's?
 - + Is it possible to lie without saying a word?
 - + What would you do differently if you know no one would judge you?

STRONG INTRODUCTIONS – OTHER FACTORS

- ✘ Your introduction, aside from being catchy and grabbing your reader's attention, should also include the following information:
 - + Let the reader know what you will be writing about
 - + Hint at your theme, lesson, or overall message
 - + Transition into the beginning of your story – the personal narrative