**313 Assignment: Transformational Personal Narrative**

Average Length: 3-5 pages

Possible Points: 100

Due: **First draft** Friday, Jan. 27; **Final draft** Monday, Jan. 30 at beginning of class

Stories are one of the most important tools we have to make meaning of our lives and our world. The stories that we tell about ourselves reveal the experiences, big and small, that have made us who we are. A favorite author of mine, Rachel Naomi Remen, explains that “while facts bring us knowledge, stories lead to wisdom.” A good story is enjoyable to read because it allows us to see something familiar--a piano lesson, a visit to a rest home, a death of a prized pet--through another person’s eyes, and we gain a perspective that we may not before have recognized. Stories ultimately invite us to become a guest in someone’s life, and through their individual experiences we learn something about ourselves as well.

This assignment will give you the chance to describe a meaningful story from your life that changed you in a large or small way. Make sure that you share a story that tells us about who you are and not simply about what you have done. Also, make sure that the experience that you choose to narrate is one that you remember well enough to make it come alive for the reader.

Your theme--loss of childhood innocence, recognition of the importance of friendship or family, learning of your own courage or determination, disappointed expectations, etc.--should be carefully chosen and the scenes in the narrative should weave your theme implicitly throughout the writing. By the conclusion, a reader should understand what transformation has occurred. Make sure that you “show” vs. “tell” your transformation. Do not simply affix a moral to your story. Any insight into your change should be implicit (shown) and not explicit (told).

Several types of content will **not** be appropriate for this narrative:

●      First, do not write about your first kiss or date with your beloved. While that is very interesting to you and, perhaps, your children or grandchildren, your average reader doesn’t care.

●     Second, do not write about deeply spiritual experiences, as those are too sacred to share and impossible to grade.

If you have a question about whether the topic you have chosen is a valid one for this assignment, please check with me.

Transformative Personal Narrative Rubric

As a writer, one of the most effective techniques used to critique any type of writing (including your own) is to ask questions of the text. The questions below will be the questions asked of your piece. Using questions as a basis to respond to/critique the text allows a conversation occur between author and audience as opposed to giving “The Right Answer.”

1. Is the paper focused or does it try to cover too many points? Does the paper show effective use of foreground and background in highlighting the important events and not drawing attention to unimportant events, details, etc.? Do you leave the paper with a clear understanding of the main intent of the author?
2. Do the scenes in the paper effectively capture the point that the author is trying to make? Are some scenes underdeveloped? Should some scenes be deleted?
3. Does a reader connect with the narrative because of the universality of the point being made, or is the narrative only of interest to the writer? Does a reader say, “So what?” or “Who cares?” Is it relevant?
4. Is there evolution of character in the paper? Does the author “show” or simply “tell” why changes in perspective occur?
5. Is there any device used by the author to thematically tie the narrative together? Is there a sense of unity? Did all of the pieces of the narrative work together to establish a purposeful “whole”?
6. Is the writer’s introduction interesting? Do you wish to keep reading? Is the introduction relevant to the rest of the paper?
7. Does the writer use sensory details to “show” what is happening and allow you to visualize the scene, or is the author mainly “telling” you what occurred? Are strong verbs and description used?
8. Is there direct dialog or only indirect dialog? Is the dialog realistic to the persona presented? Is it too formal or stilted or ambiguous?
9. Are there any ambiguities in the paper? Are there places that confuse you? Do you need more information in order to understand what is happening?
10. Do you end up caring about the characters in the narrative, or do you leave not knowing them enough to care?
11. Does the organization of the narrative work well to tell the story? Could it have been a more interesting story if it were told through a different organizational strategy beginning with a different scene or focus?
12. Does the conclusion effectively wrap-up the story? Does the author tack-on a moral?