

First and Last Name

ENG 050

Formal Assignment #1

Due Date: Draft # 1 posted to your webpage by 11:59 pm on October 18. \*You can revise this story as often as you like until the end of the semester. Post each draft to your webpage to show the revisions you've made.

### ***Formal Assignment #1: Life-Choice Memoir***

**Prompt:** Please write a narrative about a time when you made a high-stakes life choice. The story must be about you and must emerge from a real experience in your life. "You can't make this stuff up!" (Lee Gutkind).

**Rhetorical Mode:** Narration.

**Genre:** Creative Nonfiction. "true stories well told." (Lee Gutkind).

**Sub-Genre:** Memoir.

**Purpose:** Please choose your primary purpose and consider if you have a secondary and tertiary purpose. Here are your three main choices: Persuade, Inform, Entertain.

**Audience:** Your primary audience is your instructor and classmates. Your secondary audience is people who visit your website. **If you are writing about a sensitive topic and wish to keep the draft private, please email me so we can work out an arrangement for you to submit your work another way.**

**Style:** This is a creative nonfiction narrative so please blend both descriptive (showing) and expository (telling) writing. MOST of this story should illustrate a scene from your life. SHOW the reader what happened. Here is a good test: you should be able to draw your scene as if it were a comic strip.

**Focus:** Please focus on one particular event or story. Do not try to write about three different experiences from your life—because you will not have the space in this assignment to fully develop your ideas.

**Writers' Choices:** Please consider the context, text, and subtext of your story:

- *Context:* Your story should include a setting and situated information that frames the plot (similar to kairos). To create context, your story should provide the 5 Ws: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.
- *Text:* You choose if your story is shared in first person, past or present, humorous or sad, etc. Otherwise, your story should provide at least one showing scene that includes description and action.
- *Subtext:* Your story is not much of a story if it does not include subtext (what I like to consider as "what's left unsaid and under the surface of the text"). To create subtext, please consider **themes** (life choice is one major theme—but I urge you to create other themes) and **conflict** (person vs person, person vs oneself, person vs environment, person vs nature, etc.). Your story must have conflict!

**Process:** To begin, review your multiple blog posts about making a life choice. Next, *Think On Paper* about the issues surrounding your decision: freewrite, list, cluster, discuss, and read other creative nonfiction stories to generate ideas. Then, please consider answering one of the following questions in your own creative nonfiction narrative (if you have another idea for a question and topic, please email me first):

- What high-stake choices evoke positive or negative feelings for you?
- What people from your past – folks you cannot interact with anymore – have had the most positive impact on your abilities to make life choices?

- What metaphorical places from your past would you like to return? An ex-boyfriend’s hug? Sunday mornings with your grandmother? Did you choose to leave this “place?”
- Has a belief system alienated you from others?
- What social system (family, religion, education, media, economic class, law, government) most impacts your decision making? Does this social system help or hinder your choices?
- How has life as a college student impacted you? New campus? Back to school after a hiatus?
- Which conversations, dreams, accidents, hobbies, (moments) etc. might you use to jumpstart a story?

**Product:** This narrative must be around 500 words and formatted as follows: 12-point font, double-spacing. Please include an original title centered at the top of the essay. This doesn’t count as an original title: *Life-Choice Memoir*. We will use these criteria to evaluate your essay:

- \_\_\_\_ Your story uses a scene to jump right into the action.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story has a clear time frame (this story should take place over a short period of time).
- \_\_\_\_ Your story has a clear structure (showing and telling sections are well-integrated and cohesive).
- \_\_\_\_ Your story includes reflective “telling” moments.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story illustrates the over-arching theme of a life-choice.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story explores at least one literary conflict.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story is well organized, descriptive, and analytical.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story uses language that is appropriate and compelling for your audience (tone, style, diction).
- \_\_\_\_ Your story shows signs of careful proofreading, with minimal grammatical or spelling errors.
- \_\_\_\_ Your story is around 500 words.

#