

First and Last Name
ENG 100
Formal Assignment #1
Due Date: TBD

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.

Style: This is a creative nonfiction narrative so please blend both descriptive (showing) and expository (telling) writing. Feel free to include dialogue, poetry, video, and audio. Please use the tone that is most appropriate for your purpose and audience. MOST of this story should be illustrating a scene or two or three from an in your life. SHOW the reader what happened. Here is a good test: you should be able to draw your scenes as if they were a comic strip. If you cannot find enough description in your writing to create a visual scene, you are not SHOWING the reader your scene; rather, you are TELLING them about what happened. Remember our in-class storyboard session! As a ratio, think about 80% showing writing (description and action in scenes) and 20% telling. Just to give you an idea. If you choose to compose a multimodal project, you will use various print and visual texts to show your home to an audience.

Focus: Through a series of scenes you should use narrative writing to show your own experience. 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, I ask that your story opens with a showing scene that includes description and action. Then you can add sections of telling to provide context and reflection. Remember Lee Gutkind points out that showing scenes are the building blocks of a creative nonfiction narrative.
- *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? Online course? How can you compose specific scenes to explore how your life as a college student is filled with making high-stakes choices?
- Which conversations, dreams, accidents, hobbies, (moments) etc. might you use to jumpstart a story?

Product: This narrative must be 1,000 – 1,500 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 an opening anecdote 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 located between the showing scenes.
- _____ 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 1,000 – 1,500 words.