

WRITING PORTFOLIO:

An Autobiography Assignment



Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.”

— *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens

WRITING PORTFOLIO: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT [5 QUIZ GRADES + 2 TEST GRADES]

You will write some assignments in class; others will be homework; you will turn some in for comment, and share others in peer groups. Since you are required to have your book printed and bound professionally, you must plan ahead and budget time and money.

You should revise **ALL** assignments before rewriting them in final form. All assignments must be in Good Notes. Most assignments will be approximately a page long. You must start every new assignment on a new page. Chapters will be submitted to Writable for originality and grammar reviews [5 quiz grades]

☐ **PROFESSIONAL BINDING--** Plan ahead and budget time and money to have your book printed and bound. You may choose strip or spiral binding, or basic 3-holes and a notebook (depending on your choices.)

☐ **A COVER--** Your cover should include your selected title, your name, and an illustration appropriate to your book. For illustrations, consider a word pattern, graphic design, collage, original drawings, photographs, magazine pictures, quotations, etc.

☐ **A TITLE PAGE--** Select a word or phrase particularly meaningful for you to serve as your title. Browse through a thesaurus, listen to music you love, think of special people and places and interests, and then submit several possible titles. “A Book about Me” or “My Autobiography” are poor titles because they are vague and impersonal. Illustrate the title page with the title, name, hour, and date due.

☐ **A TABLE OF CONTENTS--** List the assignment number and title of all assignments in your autobiography. Title each content page. 25 + 5 Free Choices

☐ **AN INTRODUCTION--** Explain the significance of your title, making clear why it is relevant to your life in particular. Also include a brief description of this writing project and its purposes -- in your own words.

Every assignment should be:

- ✓ a thoughtful response to the assigned topic
- ✓ revised as necessary
- ✓ neatly organized in Good Notes
- ✓ in order according to this assignment booklet
- ✓ in black ink for text, other colors may be added for non-text
- ✓ titled on the top line
- ✓ numbered by assignment (not page) in the upper right corner

DONENESS counts, but your writing should also demonstrate appropriate word usage, sentence structure, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

WRITING PORTFOLIO: SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS

Prologue (or Introduction): Explain the significance of your title, making clear why it is relevant to your life in particular. Introduce yourself gracefully to your reader and capture our attention. Include a brief description of this writing project and its purposes — in your own words. [To be written last]

1. **What's in a Name?:** Names are an integral part of who we are. They shape our sense of who we are. Explore your feelings about “the unity between [your]self and [your] name.” Are these the names you would have chosen for yourself? Surname, middle name, Christian name? Is there a story behind your naming? Someone famous, a family member, weird initials? Does your name have symbolic meaning? Is it ethnic or historic or literary? Did your parents consider other names? In short, how do you live with your name?

<https://www.behindthename.com/>

2. **Personal Alphabet:** Browse through a dictionary, looking for adjectives to describe yourself. Know the meaning of the words you select and be able to explain how each word you've chosen fits you. Choose at least ONE adjective for each letter of the alphabet. Be sure you choose the adjective form of words. For example, “excite” is a verb and “excitable” is an adjective. “Exciting” is a participle so it can be used as an adjective...**BUT** “excitable” and “exciting” mean very different things.

<https://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/adjectives.shtml>

3. **Sensory Experiences:** The five senses allow us to perceive whatever is tangible, or concrete. A sensory experience is something we can taste, touch, smell, see, or hear. For example, ice-cold water-melon, hot dogs sizzling over a charcoal fire, mosquito bites, fireworks, and the music of the ice-cream wagon are sensory experiences I associate with a Fourth of July picnic. Describe a specific time and place which recalls rich sensory experiences for you. Include at least TWO details that appeal to each of the FIVE senses.

<https://www.wtpps.org/cms/lib/NJ01912980/Centricity/Domain/1794/Adjectives%20to%20Enhance%20Description-%20Sensory.pdf>

4. **A Quality Personality:** In J. Ruth Gendler's *The Book of Qualities*, 70 abstract qualities come to life, walking and talking, borrowing Grandmother's shawl and telling scary stories late into the night... personification at its best! Precise, specific images reveal each abstract quality as a vivid personality. After you read samples in class, choose one quality from the list provided. Check the dictionary and the thesaurus, exploring possible meanings and hunting down synonyms.

These qualities are real people, with weird relatives, bad friends, unique clothing styles, and strange stories to tell. Make your chosen quality a real personality, too. Complete a sensory CLUSTER for your quality — sight, smell, taste, touch, sound. Then write and carefully polish a ONE-TO-THREE-paragraph personification of your quality. Make every word count on this one!

https://mseffie.com/assignments/book_of_qualities/Qualities.pdf

5. **Color Your World:** In color, and about color, this assignment honors every crayon ever nibbled by any kid. Although you don't have to use crayons, use the color(s) themselves as part of your writing. You could write a poem about the things you associate with a specific color, such as all the blues there are! Or explain the colors you associate with different emotions. Or make lists of best colors to wear or drive in or... You have freedom with content here, since color is the key ingredient. Maybe a myth about “How Pink Was Born”?

<https://www.poetrygames.org/poetry-machine/poetry-9.php>

6. **Room Sweet Room:** We are territorial animals, instinctively seeking a place we can call our own. The rooms we live in and how we decorate them are as revealing as our clothing. Examine your own room and all the things that make it uniquely yours. Describe the room, not just by listing the things in it, but by conveying the feelings you have for the room and the items in it.

<https://www.ndapandas.org/wp-content/uploads/archive/Documents/News/FeelingsWordList.pdf>

7. **Personal Metaphors:** Make a list of metaphorical comparisons. Think, “If I were an animal, what kind of animal would I be?” For each item, write the general LABEL and then your specific comparison. Be realistic, be somewhat honest, and be able to explain your choices. Don’t say you are a rose, if you’re really a daisy.

<https://www.scribbr.com/rhetoric/metaphor/>

1. Animal
2. Car
3. Article of Clothing
4. Day of the Week
5. Food
6. Color
7. Movie
8. Fragrance
9. Type of Building
10. Plant
11. Musical Instrument
12. Geometric Shape
13. Piece of Furniture
14. Song
15. Season of the Year
16. A Video Game Character
17. Cartoon or Comic Character
18. Appliance or Machinery
19. Natural Phenomenon
20. Word

8. **Extended Metaphors:** Go back to your list of personal metaphors. Choose FIVE that you can extend by explaining the comparison in detail. Write a paragraph for each personal metaphor by giving four or five specific points of comparison. If you are like an alley cat, discuss four characteristics of an alley cat and explain the ways in which you have the same characteristics.

<https://www.scribbr.com/rhetoric/metaphor/>

9. **Symbolic Recipe:** Write a symbolic recipe for yourself. This means your ingredients are not blood, muscle, bone, and a hank of hair, but abstract qualities and personality traits (like patience, friendliness, humor). What is really necessary to create you. Follow standard recipe format: a list of ingredients and exact measurements, followed by a paragraph of instructions, advice about the proper sequence of the steps, and any tips or warnings.

<https://prezi.com/d9ttc7bxzx4s/symbolic-recipe/>



From the Kitchen of: _____

Ingredients

Directions

10. **Telling Tales:** Think back to memories you associate with family storytelling. You know, the ones you hear over and over every holiday. Maybe these tales are the legends that have given your family courage in hardship? Maybe they are religious stories or goofy songs or true family history? Maybe they all seem to be about what a bad kid you were? Embarrassing, hilarious, unbelievable? Retell a story you remember as part of your family's heritage OR makeup one you wish had been told (and may tell in your own family circles later).

11. **Unfinished Sentences:** Complete each of the following sentences by expanding them into short paragraphs. As always, be specific.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I usually worry about... | 6. I feel frustrated when... |
| 2. I feel angry when... | 7. I feel depressed when... |
| 3. I'm moody when... | 8. I am comfortable when... |
| 4. I'm happiest when... | 9. I feel nervous when... |
| 5. I feel confident when... | 10. I feel sentimental when... |

Use the PREP Method

PREP stands for **Point, Reason, Example, and Point**. You start by stating your point, which is the main idea or opinion you want to convey. Then, you give a reason, which is the justification or explanation for your point.

12. **Personal Symbol:** Write about an object that has special symbolic meaning for you. It might be a gift from someone you love, an award of which you are proud, a souvenir from a place you miss, a childhood toy you still treasure, a family photograph, whatever. Describe the object, appealing to the senses as appropriate and giving specific details. Also explain what it symbolizes for you. Add a picture at the top of the page.

13. **Map of Life:** Draw a stylized map, beginning with your birth and ending with the present. Along the way, include little labels or diagrams of what you remember as important events, places, and people in your life. Keep all items in order, but leave enough space between individual items to fill in as you think of additional information. Write small since it must fit on **ONE** page. You may use branching paths or a legend.

Hand drawn works best here.

14. Synectics: Synectics makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar. It is the basis of all metaphor and involves the process of creative problem-solving. Each of the following sets of questions ask for choices between unrelated answers — answers which can be logically related somehow — and yet, there is no single correct answer. **BUT** correct answers would rephrase the question as part of the answer.

Think carefully about the choices offered, make a choice, and then explain your reasons for choosing as you have. It is your explanation which proves your answer “right” or “wrong.”

<https://prezi.com/hqnulnqo9hvi/the-synecitics-model/>

1. Which is wiser? a pen or a pencil?
2. Which is easier to forgive? a street or a sidewalk?
3. Which is smarter? a clock or a calendar?
4. Which is easier to teach? a question or an answer?
5. Which is like a contest? a cloud or a sunset?
6. Which is more fearful? new or old?
7. Which is like a promise? mathematics or science?
8. Which is more difficult? a dream or a nightmare?
9. Which is braver? an hour or a year?
10. Which has more pride? an entrance or an exit?
11. Which is easier to close? a road or a map?
12. Which is like a legend? a mirror or glass?
13. Which is more suspenseful? rain or snow?
14. Which has less charm? a signature or an autograph?
15. Which is more trustworthy? history or literature?
16. Which is more useful? a friend or an enemy?
17. Which is sadder? seek or find?
18. Which costs more? a home or a house?
19. Which is happier? music or art?
20. Which is like a valentine? the truth or a lie?

15. A Day in the Life: Write about a part of your life as if it were a passage from a novel. Refer to yourself in the **THIRD PERSON** — not “I woke up” but rather “she woke up.” Exaggerate, elaborate, and prevaricate if you wish — there’s truth to be found in fiction, too.

[start early in the morning and end when he/she went to sleep at night]

16. These Words Belong to Me: Make a list of words which have special power and magic. Think of common words with uncommon meanings, or even strange new words which allow you to think a new kind of thought. For example, do you know what “serendipity” means? Find out why it’s so wonderful. What’s ironic about a “scar”? List and define at least **TEN** words. For each word, explain why this particular word belongs to you. Or perhaps give me a hint hidden in a question?

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/magical>

17. Look Who I Look Up To: Think of three people of established reputation whom you admire. You may need to do some formal research on these people, so don't choose your Aunt Helen unless she's in the encyclopedia. You must be specific. If you admire Martin Luther King, Jr., saying he fought for civil rights isn't enough. Exactly what did he do? Devote one solid paragraph to each person, telling what each person has done to deserve your admiration.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/admiration>

18. In Other Words: Try expressing yourself through someone else's words. Select at least ten "Quotable Quotes" which express your philosophy of life. Choose quotations which represent your thoughts on several aspects of life – not only love, but also faith, success, integrity, character, friendship, etc. List the **TEN** you have selected, including **ATtribution** (who said it).

[https://www.ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk/admin/ckfinder/userfiles/files/51-Inspirational-Quotes-For-Kids\(2\).pdf](https://www.ryecroft.staffs.sch.uk/admin/ckfinder/userfiles/files/51-Inspirational-Quotes-For-Kids(2).pdf)

19. My Own List of Lists:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=bY4BD9E7-48C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Now in its third edition, *The Book of Lists* lists facts from history, literature, science, entertainment, etc. For your list of lists, I have selected more personal topics. Write the general **LABEL** for each category and **UNDERLINE** it. Then list from **SIX** to **TEN** specific items under each category.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. People who have influenced me... | 6. Things that worry me... |
| 2. Places that make me happy... | 7. Things I would like to know how to do... |
| 3. Places I would like to go... | 8. Things that have moved me... |
| 4. Things in people which I like... | 9. Ideas that intrigue me... |
| 5. Things in people which I dislike... | 10. My personal favorites... |

20. As Time Goes Bye-Bye: *Carpe diem* (or, Seize the day!). Before time passes you by, what things do you want to do? What one thing (one goal) do you most want to do by the time you are thirty-five? Why? What have you already said good-bye to – people, places, ideas, stages in your life, hopes, dreams, sorrows? Reflect on those good-byes and/or grand plans. Make a list with short explanations, or concentrate on explaining one specific goal or farewell in depth. Add an image here.

FIVE FREE CHOICE ASSIGNMENTS:

- 21. **Free Choice Assignment #1:** Titled and included in the Table of Contents.
- 22. **Free Choice Assignment #2:** Titled and included in the Table of Contents.
- 23. **Free Choice Assignment #3:** Titled and included in the Table of Contents.
- 24. **Free Choice Assignment #4:** Titled and included in the Table of Contents.
- 25. **Free Choice Assignment #5:** Titled and included in the Table of Contents.

Epilogue: Imagine that a complete stranger just picked up this portfolio. The stranger reads it from page one to page thirty-nine. How would this stranger conceive of the author? What kind of person appears to have filled these pages? Write a **CHARACTER SKETCH** of the person captured in these pages from an outsider's point of view. Refer to **SPECIFIC PIECES** of writing to support the stranger's impression of the author (you, of course).

FIVE FREE CHOICE

21. Remembrance of Things Present: In twenty years you will have forgotten most of the things that fill your life now. What are the things about who you are now, what you enjoy and value, what you do with your time, and so on that you want to remember twenty years from now? Imagine what will be important to your memory of yourself later on. Write these things down.

22. Remembering the Child: Imagine yourself a sweet little toddler. How did others see you when you were very little? Interview someone who knew you as a small child -- one of your parents or grandparents, an older sibling, or an aunt or uncle, for example. Write about their favorite memory of you. Some possibilities are when you learned how to walk or ride a bike, a memorable sports game or musical event, a visit to grandparents, a special birthday, a fulfilling and relaxing evening at home, or anything else that stands out.

23. One Medium Suitcase: Imagine that you are leaving home forever, and you can only take what will fit in one medium-sized suitcase with you. Specifically, what will you take with you and why? Explain.

24. Advice to the Young: Based upon your experience, what practical information about life, living, and growing up could you give to a younger person? You may write this as a letter to a generalized “young person,” to the child you hope to have some day, to a specific young person you know, or even to your younger self.
Dear Self:

25. Futures -- Fantasy and Fact: This is a three-part assignment. In the first paragraph, pretend that you can see yourself 10 years from now. Describe your future as it could be if all your wishes came true. This description is “romantic.” In the second paragraph, describe what your life will be like 10 years from now if you continue just as you are now. No miracles or magic allowed. This view is “realistic.” For most people, the “romantic” and “realistic” descriptions are very different. In the third paragraph, analyze the discrepancy. Discuss the specific differences between your two descriptions and how you feel about these differences. Finally, explain the steps you can take to find a sensible compromise between the romantic and the realistic.

26. Memorable Event: Include a ticket stub, program, or some other tangible evidence to represent an event you experienced this year that in some way was memorable. Describe the event, with whom you attended, what was special about it, if you would do it again, etc. For example, you might describe a concert of your favorite group, a special movie you anticipated, a family reunion, or a birthday party. Don’t forget the evidence!

27. Valuable Lessons: List the TEN most valuable lessons you’ve ever learned. Write a sentence explaining why each lesson was valuable to you. Consider such things as learning to multiply, but also think of the more abstract lessons concerned with wisdom and experience rather than skills. Once again, let your list “jell” for a few days. Then rank the lessons from one to ten in the margin.

28. Are You Hungry?: In great detail, using lots of description, tell us about your favorite meal. Where is it served? When? Who cooks it? What dishes does it include? What's your favorite part of your favorite meal? This can be a home-cooked meal or a fancy dinner out or even your usual fast food...whatever makes you lick your lips.

29. Lessons I Learned After It Was Too Late: It seems that we always learn the most important lessons the hard way, usually when it’s too late, when we’ve already made our big mistakes. Look back over your life and write approximately a PAGE on the lessons you learned after it was too late.

30. Rewarding Experiences: List the TEN most rewarding and beautiful experiences you’ve ever had. Write a sentence explaining why each experience was special to you. Let your list “jell.” After a few days, reread your list and think carefully about which experiences were most rewarding. Then in the margin, rank them from one to ten.

Title of Writing Portfolio _____

Table of Contents Checklist and Grading Rubric

- _____ Prologue
- _____ 1. What's in a Name?
- _____ 2. Personal Alphabet
- _____ 3. Sensory Experiences
- _____ 4. A Quality Personality
- _____ 5. Color Your World
- _____ 6. Room Sweet Room
- _____ 7. Personal Metaphors
- _____ 8. Extended Metaphors
- _____ 9. Symbolic Recipe
- _____ 10. Telling Tales
- _____ 11. Unfinished Sentences
- _____ 12. Personal Symbol
- _____ 13. Map of Life
- _____ 14. Synectics
- _____ 15. A Day in the Life
- _____ 16. These Words Belong to Me
- _____ 17. Look Who I Look Up To
- _____ 18. In Other Words
- _____ 19. My Own List of Lists
- _____ 20. As Time Goes Bye-Bye

FIVE FREE CHOICE

- _____ 26. Free Choice #1: _____
- _____ 27. Free Choice #2: _____
- _____ 28. Free Choice #3: _____
- _____ 29. Free Choice #4: _____
- _____ 30. Free Choice #5: _____
- _____ Epilogue

CHOOSE 5 and add to the Table of Contents

- _____ 21. Remembrance of Things Present
- _____ 22. Remembering the Child
- _____ 23. One Medium Suitcase
- _____ 24. Advice to the Young
- _____ 25. Futures – Fantasy and Fact

- _____ 26. Memorable Event
- _____ 27. Valuable Lessons
- _____ 28. Are You Hungry?
- _____ 29. Lessons I Learned Too Late
- _____ 30. Rewarding Experiences

NEATNESS

- _____ Cover Design
- _____ Title Page
- _____ Each Assignment Numbered
- _____ Each Assignment Titled
- _____ Assignments in Order
- _____ Organized Good Notes

CORRECTNESS

- _____ Follows Directions
- _____ Adequate Length
- _____ Grammar Acceptable
- _____ Punctuation Acceptable
- _____ Spelling Acceptable
- _____ Corrections Made

Rubric for a Narrative Writing Piece

FEATURES	6	5	4	3	2	1
FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject and unifying event clear and maintained •Theme/unifying theme explicitly stated •Reactions present throughout •Has effective closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject and unifying event clear and maintained •Theme/unifying event is stated in opening or conclusion •Reactions present throughout (may not be even) •Has closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject and unifying event are clear - may be prompt dependent (requiring reader inference) •Theme/unifying event is stated and/or summarized •Reactions present •May end abruptly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject/topic clear; theme/unifying event may not •Reader is able to infer theme/unifying even •Overpromise/underdeliver OR underpromise/overdeliver •No reactions Abrupt ending •Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate a developed focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject/issue vague •Reader must infer main event and theme •Unrelated ideas or major drift from focus (brainstorming) •May be insufficient writing to determine that subject and unifying event can be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subject and issue unclear, limited or confusing •Insufficient writing to show criteria are met
ELABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Most episodes and reactions elaborated with specific detail •Some episodes may be developed with more detail than others (not necessarily balanced or even) •Some development of depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some episodes or reactions elaborated with specific details •Contains minimal depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •May contain list of episodes/events and/or reactions with some extensions •Most elaboration may be general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •May contain simple list of episodes and/or reactions with no extensions •Mostly general or underdeveloped •Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed elaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Some attempt at elaboration •May be confusing, unclear, or repetitive •May be insufficient writing to determine that elaboration can be maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elaboration is absent, confusing, or repetitive •Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Narrative structure clear-sequence of episodes moves logically through time without noticeable gaps •Episodes appropriately paragraphed •Coherence and cohesion demonstrated through some appropriate use of devices (transitions, pronouns, causal linkage, etc.) •Varied sentence structure produces some cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Narrative structure is evident – sequence of episodes moves logically through time with a beginning, middle and ending with few gaps •Most paragraphing is appropriate •Coherence and cohesion (sentence to sentence) evident; may depend on holistic structure (chronology) •Most transitions are appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Narrative structure is noticeable, but the reader may have to infer it-sequence of episodes moves logically through time with some gaps •Some appropriate paragraphing •Evidence of coherence may depend on sequence •If present, transitions may be simplistic or even redundant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Structure is attempted, but reader may still have to infer •Lacks appropriate narrative structure (off-mode) •May have a major lapse or inappropriate transitions that disrupt progression of events •May have little evidence of appropriate paragraphing •Limited structure within paragraphs (e.g., lacks purposeful ordering of sentences) •Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Structure is attempted, but with little success (may be a random presentation of ideas) •Confusing •Insufficient writing to determine that organization can be sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Very confusing/little or no attempt at structure •Insufficient writing to meet criteria

CONVENTIONS	Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in mechanics. Creative and effective use of spelling strategies.	Consistent agreement between parts of speech. Uses correct punctuation, capitalization, etc. Consistent use of spelling strategies.	Maintains agreement between parts of speech. Few errors in mechanics. Applies basic grade level spelling.	Occasional errors between parts of speech. Some errors in mechanics. Some evidence of spelling strategies.	Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Many errors in mechanics. Limited evidence of spelling strategies.	Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Frequent errors in mechanics. Little or no evidence of spelling strategies.
INTEGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully-developed paper for grade level Clear and purposeful Focus; in-depth, balanced elaboration; sequence of episodes is coherently and cohesively developed throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed paper for grade level All features are not equally well-developed throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bare-bones-developed paper for grade level Simple and clear, presenting nothing more than the essentials Limited depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partially developed Some (or one) of the feature(s) are not sufficiently formed, but all are present Lacks narrative structure Inference is usually required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to address the assignment, but only rudiments of techniques for forming Focus, Elaboration, and Organization can be detected Some confusion and/or disjointedness May be insufficient writing to determine that the features can be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not fulfill the assignment; barely deals with the topic; or does not present most or all of the features Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met

Focus: *The clarity with which a paper presents and maintains a clear main idea, point of view, unifying event or theme.*

Support/Elaboration: *The degree to which the main point or event is elaborated and explained by specific details, descriptions, and reactions*

Organization: *The clarity of the logical flow of ideas (coherence and cohesion)*

Conventions: *Use of standard written English*

Integration: *Evaluation of the paper based on a focused, global judgment of how effectively the paper as a whole uses basic features to fulfill the assignment*