Senior Capstone Project

Personal Narrative Assignment

Mr. Gathman • English 7/8

Description:

For this essay you will need to write about one specific experience that changed how you acted, thought, or felt. Use your experience as a spring board for reflection. Your purpose is not to merely tell an interesting story but to show your readers the importance and influence the experience has had on you.  
  
Good stories occur everywhere and can be told about anything. They are as likely to occur in your own neighborhood as in some exotic locale. Potential stories happen daily; what makes potential stories actual stories is putting them into language, recounting them, orally or in writing. Good stories are entertaining, informative, lively, and believable; they will mean something to those who write then as well as to those who read them.  
  
All stories account for something that happened-an event or series of events, after which something or somebody is changed. As in a fictive story, your personal essay will contain the similar elements: a character (who?) to whom something happens (what?), in some place (where?), at some time (when?), for some reason (why?), told from a particular perspective (how?).

In other words, any time you render a full account of a personal experience, you answer what is commonly known as "reporter's questions"--the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions reporters ask themselves to make sure their reports of news stories are complete. Whether your essay is engaging or not depends upon the subject, your interest in telling it, and the skills you use to weave together these story elements.

Characteristics:

* Narratives make a point
* Narratives convey action and details
* Narratives present a conflict and create tension
* Narratives sequence events
* Narratives use dialogue
* Narratives are told from a point of view

Possible Topics:

* Did you ever have a long-held belief or assumption shattered?
* Can you trace the change to one event or a series of events?
* Is there a particular experience that you observed that has had a profound influence on your life?
* Is there a person that who has greatly influenced you?
* Is there a decision that you had to make, or a challenge or an obstacle that you faced?
* Was there ever a moment in your life when you decided to reform, to adopt a whole new outlook?
  + How would you characterize your attempt? (Successful? Unsuccessful? Laughable? Painful?)
* Winning or Losing – Although more common than winning, losing is less often explored in writing because it is more painful to recall.
* Milestones – When you write about milestones, pay special attention to the physical details that will both advance your story and make it come alive for readers.
* Daily Life – You might describe practicing, rather than winning the big competition, or cleaning up after, rather than attending the prom.