

Short Write No. 1:

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation:

Expressive Writing – The Autobiography

Purpose:

One purpose of this Short Write is **to introduce the student to the three main types of college writing**, particularly the expressive style (the other two types are expository and argumentative). A second purpose is to provide the student with an opportunity to begin to **develop skills in writing concisely**, that is, expressing oneself meaningfully while at the same time staying within a two-page limit. A third purpose is for the student **to develop a sense of self**, independent of many of the restrictions of living by someone else's rules. Who are you? Where have you been? Where do you want to go? These are important questions to ask as you begin your college career. Finally, this essay will give your professor a sense of not only **who you are** as a person, but of the nature of your **writing abilities**.

Resources:

- ◆ Hodges' Harbrace Handbook, ch. 32a-b
- ◆ [Hodges' Harbrace Online Companion Site](http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20bI&product_isbn_issn=083840345X&discipline_number=300) at http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20bI&product_isbn_issn=083840345X&discipline_number=300
- ◆ Select **Chapter 32** and work through **Composition Live** (all **9** animated examples) and **Interactive Plus Activity** (all **4** activities)
- ◆ [Story Map Graphic Organizer](http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/storymap2_eng.pdf), at http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/storymap2_eng.pdf

Instructions:

First, read the sections out of Hodges' and work through the online companion site, as indicated above. Next, review your **Who Am I?** Questionnaire (you should have kept a copy of your answers). Write a two-page autobiography, using both the expository (description) and expressive writing styles. Although you must follow MLA format, you do not need citations or a Works Cited page.

In terms of **format**, your paper must:

- ❑ adhere to MLA style guidelines
- ❑ include an MLA-style title page or title section (see [example of an MLA paper](http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/Assign/mla-paper.pdf) at <http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/Assign/mla-paper.pdf>).
- ❑ be double-spaced
- ❑ have numbered pages
- ❑ have a 1-inch margin (exactly) on all four sides
- ❑ use a 12-point serif font (e.g., Times New Roman)

In terms of **substance**, you face a greater challenge, because you must write a biography about yourself (i.e., an autobiography) that does not exceed two pages. Impossible? No. Difficult? Perhaps. I suggest you use the [Story Map Graphic Organizer](http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/storymap2_eng.pdf), at http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/storymap2_eng.pdf listed above.

Also in terms of substance, your paper must include an introduction and a conclusion. If you use the Story Map Graphic Organizer, you will need to append an introduction and a conclusion to what is shown on the organizer, so that you'll have something like this:

PAGE 1

Paragraph 1: Introduction

1. Attention grabber (keeping in mind your audience and purpose of the paper)
2. Setting: When/Where

Paragraph 2: Major and Minor Characters

Paragraph 3: Plot/Problem – perhaps some significant theme(s) that have persisted throughout your life

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Paragraphs 4-5: Events 1, 2, and 3 (as examples or developments in your “life plot”)

Paragraph 6: Outcome (how you ended up where you are today) and **Conclusion**

Obviously, you cannot tell the entire story of your life. After you engage in some prewriting activities, some themes and specific plot- or problem-related ideas that correspond with key events will emerge. Then you will be ready to write. Expect to write a couple of drafts before you are able to get yourself all the way down to a concise two-page paper.

Please note that the **two-page limit is strict**. I will not read anything beyond two pages. If you need more space, use a separate title page.

Finally, although this is your first paper, you should **strive to present your best work in terms of grammar, punctuation, spelling, proofreading, typographical errors, flow of language, and proper use**. I will be looking at your writing skills as you display them here to advise you on areas in which you need improvement. We will be working on developing and refining writing skills all year.

[I need help with this assignment!](#)