

## Personal Narrative Assignment

For this assignment, you are to design a poster size (11" x 17") composition of graphics and text. Begin by reflecting on an important moment or person in your life. Determine the slant of the piece—sentimental, informative, symbolic, etc. Write your story. Limit this to about five or six paragraphs. Gather visual references that you feel best support the message. Usually students gather photographs from their photo albums or search out stock photo collections online for images that will also relate in some manner.

### Topics for consideration

A poster on a memorable experience in your life  
A pivotal point in your life  
A person who is or was significant to you

### Content

What do you wish to say with this work? What do you wish others to learn from your message? That is, how do you expect them to relate to your story? What significance did this event, experience or person have on your life? Did the experience reinforce your convictions or cause you to change—religion, social, political? Did the event or experience change your life or beliefs forever? Did it serve as a passage event? Did it bring closure? How did this person or relationship affect you?

Your writing is intended to serve the reader/viewer.

### What do you wish to reveal, expose or denote?

Are you trying to express an emotional or factual information. You may wish to inform, persuade, cause others to reflect on similar experiences in their lives.

### Narrative

This is a very important part of your project. Take the time to write your story. You may wish to have assistance from the college writing lab as someone will look over your story, making corrections or suggestions. Additional copy you may include in your visual are key phrases, titles, quotes, or other key words. Avoid the banal, the overly sentimental, and exaggeration. Maybe your topic centers on a scary moment in your life? Then write the narrative as a scary story. One of my friends saw a UFO. How do you suppose he should write that narrative? What should be his slant on that topic and how does he draw us in both visually and conceptually?

### Graphic Style

The full gamut from contemporary to historical style and in between may be considered as a preferred style that can set the mood or express your emotions regarding the chosen topic. Bold or subdued colors (personality or tone) will also set the mood. As you gather artifacts and/or references, choose those that convey essential information for telling the story. The objects or photos, drawings, collage, etc. may serve you metaphorically. Images/objects may guide the viewer to other avenues of thought and/or inspiration. The inclusion of a picture of a door, window, lamp, dried flower, etc. may very well be drawing reference to your experience and significant for the viewer to respond accordingly. Typography—font and treatment will have great impact on the development of the message.

## Artifacts

Gather important references such as photographs and/or objects associated with the topic (plane ticket, diary notes, fishing lure, dried flowers, baseball glove, iconographic images, etc.). These images are important but should be specific for supporting your message. If a person is relevant, find or make a picture of the person that conveys the emotional connection for you. Avoid the studio or the typical yearbook picture. Maybe the photo shows the person in a particular mood, conveying an important emotion.

## Imagery

You may wish to alter the original photo references by adding filter effects, textures, or to form a composite of images. Sometimes it is impossible to find the appropriate photograph for your subject. This means considering other techniques for producing graphics that make reference to the subject. Perhaps you may consider drawing from memory or producing a painting (representational or abstract) to serve the message and to create the overall feel of the work?

## Background imagery

Are you placing all text and graphics on a solid background? What color should it be? Consider the following to create contrasting elements which add visual interest:

- Textures (found textures, stock photos, constructed or painted)
- Images (a photo may serve you well as a background image on which text and other images are assembled)
- Gradients
- Grid Divisions
- Maps
- Handwriting
- Drawings (abstract marking, gesture marks, scribbles, geometric lines in any media)
- Electronic collage or montage

## Typography

Develop hierarchy of information and utilize typographic solutions to support the message. Do you wish to emphasize legibility or use type to express the extreme, the experimental, the expressive? Type treatment is a critical component to this piece. Explore type contrasts to give readability and voice to the text.

## Layout

I suggest you decide on a structure for uniting all the elements of the poster (text, pictures, icons and/or artifacts) into an effective and dynamic composition. A underlying grid is used many times to visually unite elements although it is not entirely necessary. You should think of how text and graphics are visually united; how they balance the composition; how they lead the viewers eye; how they align and form units in a symmetrical or asymmetrical union. Does your layout read flat or are you trying to create a sense of depth? How have you structured the paragraph units? What have you done to the text in terms of treatment, contrast and style to give texture, color, and form to the visual message?