

English 9
To Kill a Mockingbird
By Harper Lee

Name _____

Date Assigned _____

Date DUE _____

PERSONAL NARRATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Family history and background are an important element throughout To Kill a Mockingbird. Chapter one starts off with a close look at the history of why the Finches are who they are, and why they do what they do. The Finch family history influences the current generation. In other chapters, family histories are used to explain why various characters behave the way they do, making excuses for some and blaming others.

Consider your own life:

- Where do you come from?
- How did you get to where you are?
- How did you get to be who you are as a person?
- How are things passed down in your family?
- What do we, as families, do with our legacies (what is passed to us)? Do we follow in the footsteps of our elders, or do we consciously choose to break the cycle?

Then, look at three generations (a generation = 20-25 years) and think carefully about something which has been passed down and which has somehow changed over those generations.

Some ideas:

- A tradition or ritual which was passed on, or somehow changed
- A family story which has been passed on
- An item which has been passed on (jewelry, a piece of clothing or furniture, a book, etc.)
- A physical characteristic (the shape of your nose, height, hair color, etc.)
- A skill or habit (sports, music, writing, a profession, etc.)

Hints:

- Think about what you do in your family or something which is particular to your family, something that other families do not do or have or believe ...
- Talk to a parent (or an aunt or an uncle) and/or grandparents for ideas; they have a great deal of family knowledge that they will most likely enjoy sharing with you

CONTENT REQUIREMENTS: This personal narrative will be at least five (5) paragraphs long. Each paragraph will explain in detail one specific aspect of the family background element you choose to write about and examine.

- **Paragraph/Part I:** Describe the object/story/tradition/ritual/habit ...
- **Paragraph/Part II:** Describe how the first generation (grandparents) family member got it/saw it/practiced it ...
- **Paragraph/Part III:** Describe how the second generation (parents) family member carried it on or changed it ...
- **Paragraph/Part IV:** what it means to the third generation (*you*) ...
- **Paragraph/Part V:** Describe what you think your children (the next generation) will do with it.

Each paragraph/part needs to have a topic sentence, at least three (3) sentences to provide at least three (3) details and explain the topic sentence, and one (1) sentence to help transition to the next paragraph/part. This means you will need at least five (5) sentences per paragraph to fulfill the minimum requirement. The minimum requirement will NOT guarantee full credit; style and effort count, too! The more details you add, the more interesting your story will be for the reader.

Paragraph/Part I: Introduce the topic of your personal narrative in an engaging manner that quickly pulls the reader into your story. Explain the *who-what-when-where-why-how* of what you are going to share as a personal history. (This paragraph/part is really your introduction; it sets the stage for the rest of your story.)

Paragraphs/Parts II-IV: These are the paragraphs where you explain where the family history began and why it's important, as well as where you share your feelings about the history. You should provide enough details and descriptions to really help the reader understand your story, but always remember, you DO want to entertain and engage the reader in what you have to say!

Paragraph/Part V: As a way to conclude your personal narrative, this paragraph/part is where you clearly explain how you hope the family history will be continued or changed in the next generation. You may not have plans to raise children of your own, but what are your hopes for the children who DO follow in your family line? This is your chance to let the reader feel a sense of closure to your story.

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**PERSONAL NARRATIVE
EVALUATION RUBRIC**

CONTENT:

Part I – At least one well-developed paragraph which introduces and describes the object/story/tradition

- Interesting and engaging opening that catches the reader’s attention
- Clear and detailed (at least 3 details) description of why it’s important to your family _____
- Transition sentence leads the reader to the first-generation’s relationship with it

_____ / 5

Part II – At least one well-developed paragraph that describes where the object/story/tradition originated. (How did your ancestor get it/see it/practice it?)

- Topic sentence clearly states who started the thing/story/tradition
- At least 3 details about how and why this generation found it important

- Transition sentence leads the reader to the second-generation’s relationship with it

_____ / 5

Part III – At least one well-developed paragraph that describes how your parents or aunts and uncles carried the object/story/tradition on or changed it

- Topic sentence clearly defines how the thing/story/tradition stayed the same or changed with this generation
- At least 3 details about how and why this generation maintained it or changed it in some way _____
- Transition sentence leads the reader to your generation’s involvement with it

_____ / 5

Part IV – At least one well-developed paragraph that describes what the object/story/tradition means to you

- Topic sentence clearly explains how you feel about it
- At least 3 details about how and why you feel the way you do _____
- Transition sentence leads the reader to the next generation’s potential involvement with it

_____ / 5

Part V – At least one well-developed paragraph that describes what you think the next generation will do with the object/story/tradition

- Topic sentence that makes a clear prediction for its future
- At least 3 details explain why you make this prediction _____
- A final statement clearly expresses your overall feelings about what makes your family who you are, and why you do what you do

_____ / 5

MECHANICS & TECHNIQUE:

Your essay is written in the first person narrative voice. It tells a personal story in an engaging style.

_____ / 5

Your sentences are smooth and clear, never awkward. Ideas are logically ordered and there is “flow” to the writing. The overall effect of each part of the essay is interesting and entertaining.

_____ / 5

Your writing is free from sentence fragments and run-ons. There is variety in your sentence structure, and you punctuate each sentence correctly.

_____ / 5

Your writing contains active verbs and includes subject/verb and tense agreement.

_____ / 5

Your essay is typed or written in blue or black ink, includes a title, and is presented in a professional manner. It has been proofread for spelling and grammatical errors.

_____ / 5

TOTAL POINTS EARNED:

_____ / 50

COMMENTS: