

50 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Stone Soup Creative Writing Project

kids inspiring kids

PROJECT FOR WRITERS

THE PERSONAL NARRATIVE: SHARING MOMENTS OF SELF-DISCOVERY

MENTOR TEXT:

“Experiencing Home” by Yodit Lemma (age 12)

I think it is hard for people to believe things unless they experience or witness them. . . . I experienced the results of how war came into a city and destroyed people’s homes and jobs. Not only did I experience this but witnessed struggles for freedom that created broken hearts and famine.

TURN THE PAGE to read THE FULL PIECE.

WRITING TIP:

Personal narratives are most engaging when the author shares something heartfelt. Yodit’s piece finds its power through the exceptional honesty she brings to the description of her feelings. Be honest! Yodit admits that at first she turned her back on beggars while visiting a place where war has broken many people’s lives. This is not a flattering thing to say about oneself! Yet, her honesty makes her writing more real.

ACTIVITY

USE PERSONAL NARRATIVE TO RECORD AN IMPORTANT MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE.

STEP ONE: LIST POSSIBILITIES

Personal narratives are stories told through the viewpoint of the the author. What you saw, heard, smelled, maybe what you touched, and how you felt. Your personal narrative is also a story. A good story often includes drama and tension, a problem with resolution. Think about your life experiences over the past year or two. When have you felt strong emotions such as joy, sadness, anger, or courage? List two or three moments that stand out. Then look at your list. Which of these experiences helped you understand something on an emotional level? Tell that story.

STEP TWO: DRAFT YOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVE

You are the main character. Personal narratives are written in the “first person.” That is the “I” person. Start with the strongest part of your memory. Describe what you saw, heard, smelled,

felt with touch, were thinking, or were feeling in your heart. What did you see and feel at the beginning of your experience? By the end, what had changed? Tell us that story.

STEP THREE: REVISE YOUR PERSONAL NARRATIVE

The final revision is the stage where you tweak your story. Your story already feels finished, but you can improve details to make the strongest work you can. Read through your piece. Look for places you can add a little more detail about what you saw and thought, or the emotion you felt. When describing emotions, try to describe how you experienced the emotion: how fear made your heart beat faster, or sadness made you cry. After revising, share your work with a friend.

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MENTOR TEXT

Experiencing Home

by Yodit Lemma (age 12)

I think it is hard for people to believe things unless they experience or witness them. I once had an experience. I experienced the results of how war came into a city and destroyed people's homes and jobs. Not only did I experience this but witnessed struggles for freedom that created broken hearts and famine.

In the summer of 1992 I visited my homeland Ethiopia, longing for a happy and enjoyable holiday. But when I went there I saw soldiers in their camouflaged army suits one after the other with huge guns over their shoulders and children without homes, sleeping on the pavement. These things began to frighten me and fill my heart with sadness. Then I knew that what I thought to be a holiday was not going to be one. Many people, young and old, would come up to me and ask me for money with longing faces. At first, I would turn my back on them. But as time went on, I started to feel sorry for them and began to share the few cents I had in my pockets. There was one man in particular that I gave all my money to that day. It was when we were traveling to my grandmother's house. We had stopped for a road check and were ready to leave. Just before we left, this poor man dressed in rags and fairly thin came to me through the car windows and pleaded for money. So I gave him the money I had. The rest of the way to my grandmother's house I wondered about my country. I felt as if I should blame someone for all the hunger and poverty. But I didn't know who to blame.

That summer my fifteen-year-old cousin, Lidet, told me the different things she experienced or heard about during the war. Many times, she had to stay at home because soldiers

would shoot anyone they saw, thinking that this person was on the opposite side. She and all my family there were very frightened. Many of them began to cry because they never knew what would happen next or what would become of them.

Once many teenage orphans were asked to fight in the war. But they did not agree and tried to run away. Then, suddenly, long thunders were let from the guns of soldiers and lives of innocent people were lost. As Lidet told me this story my mind refused to accept it. I questioned why were people like this? Right then war entered my mind. All people could think and care about was war.

Among the tragic events that occurred, there's one about my grandmother that I could never really believe happened. It was said that there was a time in her village when people went crazy and shot everyone and everything they saw. As she was opening her door to go outside, a bullet swished inches past her eyes and hit a mirror. This event also gave me a fright and was harder to believe than any other event. This was because my family and I were always safe here in Zambia and yet my relatives in Ethiopia were in danger.

That summer I experienced results of tragic events, but I also had a great time with all my relatives and friends. On dark, stormy nights we would sit around the fire and play cards. As I got ready to say, "A-shea-ne-fku," which means "I win" in Amharic, the heavy orange, purple, and red flames of the fire caught my attention. I gazed as I remembered all the tragic and maddening events I'd heard about. In the background I could hear my name. YODIT! YODIT! So I snapped out of it and screamed in happiness, "A-shea-ne-fku." I win!