



Your Voice. Your Life.

Memoirs: Autobiographical Narratives



Ground Rules:

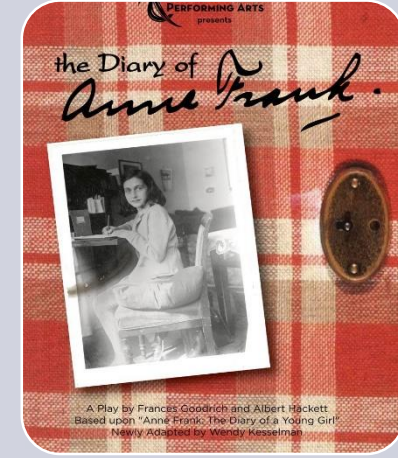
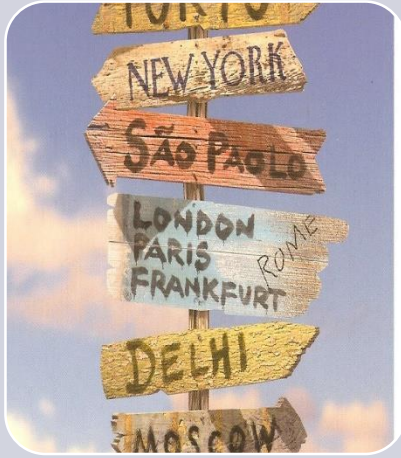
- Inappropriate comments and behavior will not be tolerated.
- Do not share personal information with other students.
- Use appropriate language at all times.
- Be kind to others.
- Remember we are here to share, have FUN, learn and explore new things!

What is a Memoir?

- A story told from the author's perspective
- Autobiographical but does not cover an entire life
- Can cover any period of the author's life: adolescent years, college years, or multiple periods over many years
- A story that gives an account of an event or several events in the author's life that s/he believes is important enough to share with others



Memoir Subjects to Consider



Travel

- Places Visited
- Events During Travel
- Lessons Learned
- Cultures and People

Relationships

- Family
- Romance
- Loss/Grief
- Friendships
- Teacher/Mentor

Perseverance

- Hardships
- Sudden Disruptions
- Overcoming/Living with a Fear or Trauma
- Inspiration/Faith/Spiritual
- Health Issue/Crisis

Young Adult Writing Sites:

- [Teen Ink](#)
- [Scholastic: Write it! Memoir](#)
- [Write the World](#)



Let's Read!

Excerpt from a Travel Memoir

Spaghetti and Soccer in Italy—from chapter 23 of Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert:

Yesterday afternoon I went to the soccer game with Luca Spaghetti and his friends. We were there to watch Lazio play. There are two soccer teams in Rome—Lazio and Roma. The rivalry between the teams and their fans is immense, and can divide otherwise happy families and peaceful neighborhoods into civil war zones. It's important that you choose early in life whether you are a Lazio fan or a Roma fan, because this will determine, to a large part, whom you hang out with every Sunday afternoon for the rest of time. Luca has a group of about ten close friends who all love each other like brothers. Except that half of them are Lazio fans and half of them are Roma fans. They can't really help it; they were all born into families where the loyalty was already established. Luca's grandfather (who I hope is known as Nonno Spaghetti) gave him his first sky-blue Lazio jersey when the boy was just a toddler. Luca, likewise, will be a Lazio fan until he dies.

“We can change our wives,” he said. “We can change our jobs, our rationalities and even our religions, but we can never change our team.”

Let's Read!

Excerpt from a Relationship Memoir

[Love Warrior by Glennon Doyle – chapter 1](#)

I was loved. Just like my daughter is loved. And still, one evening, she sat on the edge of my bed, looked up at me with naked brown eyes, and said, “I’m big, Mama. I’m bigger than the other girls. Why am I different? I want to be small again.” Her words came out jagged, like she hated to break this to me, like she was ashamed to reveal her hidden truth. I took in her tears, pigtails, lip gloss, and the dirt on her hands—left over from climbing the banyan tree in our front yard. I scanned my mind for a response worthy of her, but there was nothing to find. Everything I’d learned about bodies, womanhood, power, and pain scattered upon hearing how my little girl said the word big. Like big was her curse, her irrefutable condition, her secret, her fall from grace. Like big was something inevitably unfolding inside of her that threatened her contract with the world.

Let's Read!

Excerpt from a Perseverance Memoir

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt, chapter 1




My father and mother should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born. Instead, they returned to Ireland when I was four, my brother, Malachy, three, the twins, Oliver and Eugene, barely one, and my sister, Margaret, dead and gone.

When I look back on my childhood I wonder how I survived at all. It was, of course, a miserable childhood: the happy childhood is hardly worth your while. Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood.

People everywhere brag and whimper about the woes of their early years, but nothing can compare with the Irish version: the poverty; the shiftless loquacious alcoholic father; the pious defeated mother moaning by the fire; pompous priests; bullying schoolmasters; the English and the terrible things they did to us for eight hundred long years.

Above all — we were wet.

If You Love Writing:

-  **Read, read and read some more!**
 - Reading helps you learn how to write better and introduces you to different styles of story telling
-  **Share your stories with others and accept feedback.**
 - Feedback helps you learn what you're missing in your story and gives you an opportunity to change something you may not have otherwise
-  **Join a writing club or take writing classes.**
 - Surround yourself with other writers who can help you develop your craft and share ideas



Popular Memoirs

- A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius, by Dave Eggers
 - A college senior loses both of his parents to cancer in a span of only five weeks and is left to raise his 8-year-old brother on his own.
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou
 - A glimpse into Angelou's early life and the origins of her strength of character in the face of racism and intense personal trauma.
- Girl, Interrupted, by Susanna Kaysen
 - There would be a Boston psychiatric hospital where 18-year-old Susanna Kaysen spent two years in 1967...Readers follow her on a journey into madness and back again in this brave, vivid memoir.

Thank you!



“If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.”

— Toni Morrison

