

## EC Composition Summer Assignment 2025

Narration tells a story. Effective stories often present events in a logical sequence or order, though some may use flashbacks strategically. A story should include rich, specific details if it is going to engage and convince the reader. Those details help create a picture for the reader; even exact times, dates, and geographic locations can be helpful details because they add interest and authenticity to a narrative, immersing the reader in the action. Finally, good stories are told to make a point or purpose, often evoking empathy or expanding understanding in the reader.

A memoir is a piece of narrative nonfiction. In a memoir, an author shares his or her personal story and reflects on real life experiences that hold some significance. Rather than recounting their entire life, the memoirist often focuses strategically on specific time periods or experiences in which they are a central “character.”

**Step One:** Choose ONE memoir from the list below to read this summer. Limited copies of each book are available inside the Lowell High School Library or electronically through the Commonwealth ebook Collection. You may also decide to purchase your own copy so you can take notes in the text. Here is the link: <https://soraapp.com/library/masslibma>

- *Irena's Gift* by Karen Kirsten
- *Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls
- *A Stolen Life* by Jaycee Duggar
- *Miseducated* by Brandon Flemming
- *Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner

While you read, notice how the memoirist attempts to make the story compelling and impactful.

**Step Two:** In 1.5-2, typed double-spaced pages in proper MLA format, reflect on what the memoir you picked can teach you about effective storytelling from the writing techniques used in it. Your essay should discuss three key passages, ideally one from the beginning, middle, and end. In your discussion, explain the techniques used in these passages and how the techniques used contribute to the success of the memoir. Please see the [sample essay](#) written about the memoir, *Night*.

Be sure to identify the three passages in your reflection by using parenthetical citations. **Your reflection must include three pieces of evidence drawn from those passages; you must quote each sentence-length piece of evidence directly, and explain how they are engaging and reveal larger meaning.**

**Step Three:** After you reflect on lessons learned from the memoir about storytelling, apply those lessons to two personal statements that you could use when you apply to college. Each personal essay should be between 500 to 650 words. Please see this [sample essay](#).

Choose **TWO** different topics from the following list of six prompts drawn from the Common Application used by most colleges.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

***Any work you produce for this and any other course should be your own. The use of AI is strictly prohibited. If you violate the high school's code of academic integrity (found in the Student Handbook) or fail to complete this important summer assignment, you will be removed from the Early College Composition Class and rescheduled to a lower-level course.***

**Checklist**--On the first day of class you should have done these things:

- ☐ I read the memoir.
- ☐ I chose three passages that utilize literary techniques that contribute to the success of the memoir.
- ☐ I wrote a 1.5-2 page essay that explains how the literary techniques used contribute to the overall success and message of the memoir. In this essay I have directly quoted the evidence and used parenthetical citations to identify my evidence.
- ☐ I wrote 2, 500-650 word essays using the Common Application prompt and the literary techniques I identified from the memoir.

If you do not show up with all of these assignments, you will be removed from the class and placed in a lower level.

Book descriptions from Penguin, Amazon, and Good Reads:

***Irena's Gift* by Karen Kirsten:** *Irena's Gift* weaves together a mystery, history and memoir to tell the story of sacrifice, impossible choices, and the way trauma reverberates throughout generations. From the glittering concert halls of interbellum Warsaw to the vermin-infested prison where a Jewish woman negotiates with an SS officer to save her sister's child—*Irena's Gift* is about the lies we tell to survive and what happens when those lies unravel. It is also a story of resilience and bravery, revealing how love and hope, too, can not only prevail through the worst imaginable circumstances, but resonate through time. (Penguin)

***The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls:** *The Glass Castle* is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette's brilliant and charismatic father captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family. (Amazon.com)

***A Stolen Life* by Jaycee Dugard:** An instant #1 New York Times bestseller—Jaycee Dugard's raw and powerful memoir, her own story of being kidnapped in 1991 and held captive for more than eighteen years. In the summer of June of 1991, I was a normal kid. I did normal things. I had friends and a mother that loved me. I was just like you. Until the day my life was stolen. For eighteen years I was a prisoner. I was an object for someone to use and abuse. For eighteen years I was not allowed to speak my own name. I became a mother and was forced to be a sister. For eighteen years I survived an impossible situation. On August 26, 2009, I took my name back. My name is Jaycee Lee Dugard. I don't think of myself as a victim, I simply survived an intolerable situation. *A Stolen Life* is my story—in my own words, in my own way, exactly as I remember it. (Amazon.com)

***Miseducated* by Brandon Flemming:** An inspiring memoir of one man's transformation from a delinquent, drug-dealing dropout to an award-winning Harvard educator through literature and debate—all by the age of twenty-seven. Brandon P. Fleming grew up in an abusive home and was shuffled through school, his passing grades a nod to his skill on the basketball court, not his presence in the classroom. He turned to the streets and drug deals by fourteen, saved only by the dream of basketball stardom. When he suffered a career-ending injury during his first semester at a Division I school, he dropped out of college, toiling on an assembly line, until depression drove him to the edge. Miraculously, his life was spared. Returning to college, Fleming was determined to reinvent himself as a scholar—to replace illiteracy with mastery over language, to go from being ignored and unseen to commanding attention. He immersed himself in the work of Black thinkers from the Harlem Renaissance to present day. Crucially, he found debate, which became the means by which he transformed his life and the tool he would use to transform the lives of others—teaching underserved kids to be intrusive in places that are not inclusive, eventually at Harvard University, where he would make champions and history. Through his personal narrative, readers witness Fleming's transformation, self-education, and how he takes what he

learns about words and power to help others like himself. *Miseducated* is an honest memoir about resilience, visibility, role models, and overcoming all expectations. (Amazon.com)

***Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner:** The New York Times bestseller from the Grammy-nominated indie rockstar Japanese Breakfast, an unflinching, deeply moving memoir about growing up mixed-race, Korean food, losing her Korean mother, and forging her own identity in the wake of her loss.

In this exquisite story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humour and heart, she tells of growing up the only Asian-American kid at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of a painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food. As she grew up, moving to the east coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, performing gigs with her fledgling band – and meeting the man who would become her husband – her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live.

It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal pancreatic cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

Vivacious, lyrical and honest, Michelle Zauner's voice is as radiantly alive on the page as it is onstage. Rich with intimate anecdotes that will resonate widely, *Crying in H Mart* is a book to cherish, share, and reread. (GoodReads)

## Reflection Rubric

- You reflect deeply on what the memoir you picked can teach you about effective storytelling from the techniques used in it across the whole memoir.
- You discuss the role played by the sequencing of events and the presentation of details (from the beginning, middle, and end) in revealing to readers a larger message within the memoir.
- You identify three key passages (ideally from the beginning, middle, and end) and include at least three pieces of rich and relevant quoted evidence from those passages to support your discussion, including page numbers.
- Your reflection is free from spelling and/or grammatical errors, is well organized with multiple paragraphs, and follows MLA style guidelines, including parenthetical citations.

## College Application Personal Statement Rubric

### Personal Statement #1

- Your original personal statement focuses on a key moment or two or three highly-connected true moments from your life and experiences that best respond fully to the prompt.
- Your story incorporates rich sensory details (and possibly dialogue) to help you tell an effective story that evokes empathy and expands understanding in the reader.
- You arrange your ideas and details logically and effectively within your personal statement, and you generally balance both storytelling and meaning-making.
- Your 500- to 650-word personal statement is free from spelling and/or grammatical errors, is well organized with multiple paragraphs, and follows MLA style guidelines.

### Personal Statement #2

- Your original personal statement focuses on a key moment or two or three highly-connected true moments from your life and experiences that best respond fully to the prompt.
- Your story incorporates rich sensory details (and possibly dialogue) to help you tell an effective story that evokes empathy and expands understanding in the reader.
- You arrange your ideas and details logically and effectively within your personal statement, and you generally balance both storytelling and meaning-making.

- Your 500- to 650-word personal statement is free from spelling and/or grammatical errors, is well organized with multiple paragraphs, and follows MLA style guidelines, including parenthetical citations.