

Name _____ Block _____ Memoir Title _____

Personal Narrative Revision: Telling the *Story*

People love stories. If your memoir sounds like a lecture, your readers are likely to be turned off. A *story* captivates an audience. Tension builds, something is at stake, a change occurs, and at the end, the reader has a sense of closure, and a feeling of satisfaction that the incident recounted was meaningful.

A story is not:

- a series of loosely connected events, for instance a whole summer, an entire vacation, or everything about your sports career
- a summary
- an essay with an introduction, body and conclusion

A story **has a plot** (the chain of related events that build toward a meaningful turning point). These events are usually set in motion by a **conflict**, or a struggle between or within characters. Because your work is true, **you cannot make up a conflict or a tidy resolution, but choose the parts of a real event that tell a story, and choose how you describe the events.**

Answer the questions below to help you use the elements of plot to make your piece into a compelling story.

1. **Exposition:** what background does my reader need to understand the story?

Already included? (Y/N)

2. **Rising action:** what builds suspense in my story or what could I add or rephrase to build suspense? (Remember, only the truth!)

Already included? (Y/N)

3. **Climax:** what is/will be the turning point in my story?

Already included? (Y/N)

4. What is at stake? In order for a reader to care about your story, it should be clear that the outcome of the conflict, no matter how minor, had some significance. You don't want to come right out and say it, but *show* what meant.

Already clear in my story? (Y/N) If not, how can I make it clearer?

5. **Falling action:** what wraps it all up?

What gives your story closure? Is it a satisfying ending?