

The Challenge (#15): a slice-of-life story

STORY SHAPE

Writing story journaling is different from writing journaling for pages that address a subject like "Piano playing in my life," "My Favorite Place," or "On Vacation in DC." Scrapbooking a story means telling about a particular event (which may take place in few minutes or over a longer period of time). In this telling there will be characters (you included) and these characters will be "on-stage" doing and speaking as something of note happens.

Aristotle said it first, and storytellers have been paying attention ever since. A story needs a beginning, a middle, and an end.

beginning

Figuring out where to start your story can often be the toughest challenge. The best beginnings start with something that is:

- 1) **interesting** (like an event, or decision, or information) AND
- 2) **crucial** to the story as a whole.

I often find the best way to start is to just write the whole piece and then go back and lop off the first few paragraphs which ended up being warm-up practice.

middle

This is the part where you take your audience from the beginning to the end, filling in the details -- some crucial, some just entertaining -- while sustaining interest and maybe even adding some tension.

end

In the end, a story needs a point. This is where you wrap everything up and, most importantly, this wrapping up should be connected to how your story started.

As a final note, here's something to think about. Some people argue that there are really only two stories that have ever been told:

1) the journey story

Your main character goes on a journey (truly or metaphorically), encounters obstacles and grows.

example: I started Kindergarten but hated naptimes and the teacher made me sleep behind the piano with the other restless girl and we became friends.

2) the visitation

Your main character is visited by a guest (or a situation) that introduces unexpected events, and she grows as a result.

example: *A squirrel got in our basement (or we got a flat tire or got pregnant) and after a series of failed attempts to get it out, I finally succeeded by just opening the door. (not so much growth here, but just a slightly funny story).*

YOUR CHALLENGE: write a "slice-of-life" story

A. Use your photos

- as spur to a story that happened to you or that you know of firsthand.
- and as a trigger for specific memories details. What do I see, smell, hear, taste, feel? Just start writing without overthinking it. You can go back and edit later. (ala what we learned in class #13)

B. Include your own voice, thoughts, viewpoint both at the time of the story and/or after. Think about the tone you'd like to set and whether you're going to use your concerned daughter or smart-alecky sister voice. Is this a story suited to hu-

mor or earnest recounts.

C. Use a mix of narrative & scene (as learned in class #14)

D. Make sure the story has a clear beginning, middle, end

E. Finish with insight, meaning, import, or at least a final reflection. What does the story tell about you or your subject?