

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Brainstorming Your Personal Narrative Topic

OPENER: Analyze Baldwin’s quote below. What does it make you think about reading and writing? How does this connect to the personal narratives we read? More importantly, how might it inspire you in the personal narrative you will write and the topic you might choose?

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

— James Baldwin



CLASS ACTIVITY: Today, we are choosing the topic for our personal narrative, something that is both personal and political. It can be something big that happened to you/your family/your community. It can be something seemingly small that had a big impact on you. Use any/all of the three strategies below to think about what you want to write your personal narrative about!

1. Create a VISUAL TIMELINE OF YOUR LIFE, including events (big or small) that have happened in your life (or perhaps even before you were born). Star the ones that have had a big impact on you. Maybe they are things you experienced, maybe they are things you witnessed, maybe they are realizations you had. Make this creative, drawn/written on paper with pen/pencil/markers/colored/pencils/etc. If you don’t have access to this, you can make a list below. Think about how these might connect to the political world we live in, how they can engage with themes of justice, equality, freedom, or truth, how others can connect to this even if they didn’t experience it firsthand.

2. Search the PULITZER CENTER WEBSITE by using keywords or using the [Issues](#) tab. This can help you brainstorm themes that you could connect to in your own life. You can also review the personal narratives and articles we have discussed over the past two classes. Perhaps there is a theme here that you connect to and might want to write about for your personal narrative. What themes or issues do you connect to?

3. Have a one-on-one CONFERENCE WITH YOUR TEACHER to discuss some of your ideas for the personal narrative. Use the space below to take notes.

INDEPENDENT WORK: Map how you will tell your personal story, by outlining the following –

1. What specific moment/incident is at the core of the story you are trying to tell?
2. How will you begin? How will you hook your reader?
3. What is the central obstacle/tension/problem at the center of your story?
4. What important information/ideas that are historic/political will you include?
5. How will you resolve/close your personal narrative?