Personal Narrative Prompts

1. Most of us have been in a situation where we made a promise that for one reason or another we were unable to keep. When were you disappointed because someone made you a promise that they failed to keep? Or when did you break a promise that you made to someone else?

2. Everyone has problems or challenges to overcome. What obstacles are you proud to have faced and conquered?

1. [Lightbulb Moment] Think of an experience when you realized that you suddenly understood an idea, a skill, or a concept you had been struggling with -- it might be something related to a class that you took or a specific athletic skill you were trying to perfect.

2. [Childhood Event] Choose a vivid time from your childhood -- You might think of the first time that you rode a school bus, of a time when you went to the principal's office, the first A you earned on a test or paper, earning money to buy something that you really wanted, and so on.

3. [Achieving a Goal] Think of a time when you achieved a personal goal -- you might have finally completed a marathon or triathlon, or you might have bettered your score on the SATs or another test, or you might have learned how to use a piece of software like Microsoft Word or Excel.

4. [The Good and the Bad] Think about an event in your life that seemed bad but turned out to be good. Maybe you got injured and while you were waiting for your broken leg to heal, you learned how to use a computer. What makes the event change from bad to good may be something that you learned as a result, something that you did differently as a result, or something that happened that wouldn't have occurred otherwise.

5. [Being a Teacher] Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Think of a skill that you've taught someone else how to do. Perhaps you taught someone else how to swim, showed someone how to bake a souffle, or helped someone learn how to study more effectively.

6. [Personal Rituals] Describe a personal ritual that you, your friends, or your family have. Think about the personal steps that you always go through when you prepare for an exam. Do you sit at a desk, spread books and notes across your bed, or use the kitchen table? Do you have to have something to drink...soda, water, jolt? There are numerous things that we do for which we create our own personal rituals. Choose one event -- studying for a test, writing a paper, dressing and warming up before a game, or preparing and having a special family meal.

7. [Standing Up] Choose a time when you did something that took a lot of nerve, a time when you didn't follow the crowd or a time when you stood up for your beliefs. Perhaps your friends were urging you to do something that you were uncomfortable with and you chose not to cave into peer pressure. Maybe you took a stance on a political issue that was important in your community, or you might have.

8. [Disagreeing] Think of a time when you disagreed with a decision that had been made and did something about it. The decision might have been made by someone you know personally -- your Biology teacher announced a new policy to grade for spelling and grammar on your quizzes and homework, or an older family member decides to cancel a subscription to a magazine that you liked to read. You might have responded by discussing your concerns with your principal or dean, or you might have decided to get a part-time job to earn enough money to buy the magazine yourself.