

Key Features of a Personal Narrative Essay

* **A topic that intrigues you.** A reflective essay has a dual purpose: to ponder something that you find interesting or puzzling and to share your thoughts with an audience. Your topic may be anything that interests you within our musical contexts. The challenge is to keep your readers' interest as you explore your topic and to leave the audience with the feeling that the journey/philosophical musing was pleasurable, interesting, and profitable.

* **Some kind of structure.** A reflective essay can be structured in many ways, but it needs to be structured. It may seem to wander, but all its paths and ideas should relate, one way or another. Again, the challenge here is to keep your readers' interest as you explore your topic and to leave readers satisfied that the journey was pleasurable, interesting, and profitable.

* **Specific details.** You'll need to provide specific details to help readers understand and connect with your subject, especially if it's an abstract or unfamiliar one. Think how Melissa Etheridge and Sanders offer in some instances figurative language and concrete details (or any other one of the essays we have read). How are you going to do this? Re-read these essays or any other reflective essays that you are familiar with to see how certain authors paint pictures with sensory details and specific imagery.

* **A questioning, speculative tone.** In a reflecting essay, you are working towards answers, not providing them neatly organized and ready for consumption. So your tone is usually tentative, open; the essay demonstrates willingness to entertain, accept, and reject various ideas as your essay progresses from beginning to end. You will have to constantly look at your topic from several perspectives.