

Writing BRIEF Written Collage Exercise

Large index cards are best for this exercise, but you might not have those handy tools of the trade, so separate sheets of paper will work as well. This exercise can be done alone, but works even better with writing partners or small groups. You may want to set a timer—give yourself about 5 minutes for each step.

- 1) Assemble five oversized index cards (or 5 separate pieces of paper).
- 2) On the first card: Describe a smell from your past. Don't worry whether or not it is an significant or important smell; all that matters is that it remains in your "memory bank" ten or twenty years later. Describe the smell, the quality of the odor. Is it sour or sweet, smoky or clean, sharp or dull? Does it remind you of anything? Keep this to around four or five sentences.
- 3) On the second card: Describe a part of someone you love, but just a part. Stick to one physical aspect—your mother's hair, you aunt Lula's elbows, your little brother's teeth, your best friend's smirky smile. Be specific. Instead of "Dad had rough hands," describe the texture of the palms, the shape of the fingers, the bruises or cuts, the caked oil underneath the fingernails. No more than six sentences.
- 4) On the third card: Pick a quote from your past, something you heard all the time when you were younger. It can be significant—a parent's correction or sharp criticism—or seemingly insignificant—a dumb joke your older brother made every time you sat down to eat chili. It can be anything at all. The only requirement is that you heard it often and that it remains in your memory bank, for whatever reasons. Do NOT illuminate, describe, or elucidate about the quote—just give us the quote: for example, "Drink your milk. You want to have strong bones, don't you?"
- 5) On the fourth card: Construct a disjointed list of thirty words, primarily nouns (or nouns with some slight modification). Each of these words or phrases describes a remembered something in your past. For instance, a list could look like this: "Ringo. TukTuk, Uncle Om's wooden leg, cooked cabbage, Mr. Smith from England, green bugs, falling palm trees, cold rain, simple kitchen" In this instance, it is not important to give enough information for the reader to fully understand. Just make your list. No phrase more than four words long. Thirty words in total. It is OK to write more than 30 and then cross some out.
- 6) At the top of each card, write a number—1-4.

7) On one blank card write: Why I Am Who I Am."

8) You now have constructed an experimental essay, in collage form. Read it out aloud, including the title, and the numbers at the top of each card.

Do you notice the unexpected connections and odd logic as you randomly sort the cards into new sequences?

DELIVERABLE: Write a 200-300 word essay that integrates your v1 Written Collage OR produce at least 5 posts with pictures that illustrate/express your Collage.