

Memoir

A **memoir** is a form of autobiographical writing in which a writer focuses on his or her involvement with noted people, significant events, or both. Memoirs are usually anecdotal or intimate in tone, giving the reader insight into the impact of historical events on people's lives. The focus of a memoir is usually on newsworthy people and events that the writer has known at first hand.

YOUR TURN The excerpt at the right tells of events on the day after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white person. E. D. Nixon and Ralph Abernathy were civil rights leaders. As you read the excerpt, look for characteristics of a memoir.

Essay

An **essay** is a brief work of nonfiction that deals with a single subject. Some essays are **formal**; in these, writers systematically develop their ideas in an impersonal manner. Others are **informal**, perhaps including anecdotes and humor. Two common types of essay are the persuasive essay and the expository essay. In a **persuasive essay** a writer tries to convince you to share a belief, to agree with a position, or to take some action. The primary purpose of an **expository essay** is to convey or explain information.

YOUR TURN Read this excerpt from an expository essay. What explanation is the writer offering?

Personal Essay

A **personal essay** is an essay that expresses a writer's thoughts, feelings, and opinions on a subject. This type of essay allows a writer to explore the meaning of events and issues in his or her own life. Personal essays tend to be written in an informal, conversational style.

YOUR TURN As you read this excerpt, look for clues as to the essay's subject and the author's attitude toward the subject.

MEMOIR

The first we knew about it [the Montgomery bus boycott] was when Mr. Nixon called my husband early in the morning of Friday, December 2. He had already talked to Ralph Abernathy. After describing the incident, Mr. Nixon said, "We have taken this type of thing too long. I feel the time has come to boycott the buses."

—Coretta Scott King, "Montgomery Boycott"

ESSAY

Clockwise is the turning direction of the hands of a clock, and counterclockwise is the opposite of that. Since throughout the day we often stare at clocks (dial clocks that is), we have no trouble in following directions or descriptions that include those words.

But if dial clocks disappear, so will the meaning of those words for anyone who never has stared at anything but digitals.

—Isaac Asimov, "Dial Versus Digital"

PERSONAL ESSAY

One summer, along about 1904, my father rented a camp on a lake in Maine and took us all there for the month of August. We all got ringworm from some kittens . . . and my father rolled over in a canoe with all his clothes on; but outside of that the vacation was a success and from then on none of us ever thought there was any place in the world like that lake in Maine.

—E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake"