

This is by far the best personal narrative I've read as a teacher, certainly as good as most professional models I have seen. The pages that follow are my completion of the scoring guide, the author's self-assessment journal, and, of course, the marked narrative itself. From these, you will be able to see what makes an A+ paper, how to do a good self-assessment journal, and how I grade and comment. Enjoy.

Personal Narrative Assessment Alison McKinley

Excellent. Finally I get to turn this in! I am proud of this paper! Last night I read over my original drafts; this paper has certainly come a long way. Re-writing, developing certain ideas, and focusing on diction really helped me focus my paper on the central impression I wanted to give my readers. My biggest fear is that I showed mystery instead of telling it. Hopefully the diction I used and the general flow of the paper will appeal to the reader's imagination so that they might picture every scene like they were watching it on television.

You warm this English teacher's heart!

Personal Narrative Scoring Guide

Focus & central impression

powerful clear adequate weak

Virtually flawless, superb focus w/ a perfect pace for telling such a story.

Development with showing facts, details, and examples

full minor lapses has holes inadequate

Not only is it well-developed (I thought I was "watching TV"!) but it uses figurative language to make it rich.

Vivid & precise diction

colorful, tangible, & active less so ordinary boring

Excellent choices + your paper doesn't seem cluttered or forced.

Organization, flow, and completeness

clear & smooth minor bumps hard to follow incoherent

Story flows naturally - you even control pace with varying details.

Writer's voice

powerful & original clear ordinary weak

It's definitely you.

Mechanical correctness

virtually flawless only a few errors inconsistent sloppy

Only a few very minor commas.

A+ 98/100 You have every right to be proud of this. I NEED a copy for my site. Please. (File is best)

Alison McKinley

Creative Writing Personal Narrative

Mr. Maite

22 February 2002

“Shalom”

*wonderful
start -
vivid
w/ a sense
of humor.*

I slinked out of the public restroom and onto the gray, tiled floor of the Hamburg, Germany train station, feeling especially humiliated and a little sheepish. Some woman had just wandered in on me while I was occupying a stall and started screaming at me in German, as if it had been my fault the stall door didn't lock. Even though my face looked similar to most of the German faces around me, I was discovering that my American customs, such as checking under the bathroom stall doors for feet before entering, were making me stand out just a smidgeon.

Still mortified, I shuffled across the station floor towards my mother who was waiting with our luggage. In the back of my twelve-year-old brain I was running “what if” scenarios through my head: what if I got separated from my parents, or what if a stranger tried to take me? *A little stuffy I think.* As I couldn't speak the native language, I was worried about how I might communicate with people in the event one of my worst-case scenarios actually occurred.

My stepfather was the only member of the family who could speak fluent German so *so opt* naturally, he was elected to buy our train tickets to Lund, Sweden. I spied him in one of the ticket lines and mentally began to calculate the distance from me to him, feeling safer knowing that I could get to him quickly if I needed to.

In an effort to calm my nerves as Mom and I waited, I began scanning the entirety of the train station. It was as if we were in a giant airplane hanger that stored huge jumbo jets. The interior was bright and airy, with glass ceiling panes and silver steel rafters letting in all the

McKinley 2
Excellent use of imagery to develop setting + mood.

sunlight. There were even swallows fluttering around, caught inside the roof at least 150 feet above my head. The hustle and bustle of the station was overwhelming to me, and the noise of all the trains entering and leaving the platforms was deafening. My head was spinning; the sensory overload was making me dizzy. *No doubt - this can intimidate adults!*

My eyes moved southward to the people who walked by us. As I was "people watching," my eyes landed on an incredibly strange, unsightly man who was obviously drunk and stumbling his way in his dirty sneakers towards my mother and I. What perfect targets we must have seemed for enduring his harassment for money! Mom and I had no place to escape to as we were stranded on our own private island of Samsonite suitcases. *not sure about this word.* The drunk's unshaven, dirty face, disgusted me, and as he approached the stench of the stale alcohol and cigarette smoke started choking me. *apt* Anxiety was filling my brain: it was like one of my "what if" scenarios *were* coming true. *ask me about this if you don't know why I changed it.*

"Move closer to me, Alison," my mother whispered as the man halted in front of us, leaning precariously. Obviously he was so schnockered that he could hardly stand up straight.

"Shalom... Shalom!" the panhandler hollered, unaware he was speaking too loud.

"Haben... ish... Sie... Geld..gehabt ...ish?" the man inquired slowly, trying to keep his balance.

"We don't speak German," my mother spat at the man. It was apparent to me that she was getting anxious and starting to panic at the suspicious man's pestering. *good choice.*

"Have...ish du money? Girl..ish stolish my money," the drunk sputtered slowly, desperately trying to string together even a slurred English sentence. He was still inching his way towards Mother and ~~I~~, *me (object of preposition)* getting too close; my eyes began searching, trying to locate a guard or catch my stepfather's eyes so he could come rescue us.

superb!
 Mother ~~was~~ became frenzied, and I watched her slowly begin to draw herself up to her full height as the panhandler relentlessly pleaded for money. Her face was turning purple with a mixture of rage and fear. Even the veins in her forehead began to ^{protrude} pop out, definitely not a good sign, ^{not sure this adds much} as I knew from experience. She was like a volcano building up enough steam to erupt.) ^{Whoa!}

"GET THE HELL AWAY FROM MY CHILD!!" Mom exploded. Frantically she waved her purse, a sorry substitute for a weapon, in the direction of the drunk trying to fend him away; however, she looked more like she was shooing away a cat. ^{haha! I CAN see this.}

A startled look flashed across the man's face, breaking his drunken haze. He started stumbling backwards, trying to avoid Mother's madly swinging purse. Desperately, I tried to hide myself behind one of the suitcases. I could imagine passers-by laughing to themselves at the crazy American woman's spectacle.

"Shalom...entschuldigung...Shalom..." the man warbled apologetically. Turning too quickly, ^{opt} he stumbled and swayed away from us like he was walking on a teeter-totter. Finally, he was gone.

Time passed and Mom slowly calmed herself down, the purple draining from her face and leaving her pale, ^{and opt} bewildered at her boldness towards the drunk. My stepfather returned with the train tickets, and I instinctively grabbed his hand, still fearful that the panhandler might be lurking about plotting to rob us.

When we were safely on our train to Sweden, I relaxed and was able to release the white-knuckle grip I had on my stepfather's hand. My mother fell asleep soon after our train pulled from the platform, tucked out from her angry outburst. I watched her sleep, the humor of the whole incident suddenly hitting me. She must have looked just hilarious, swinging her purse around ready to inflict pain on the man if he stepped any closer. ^h

For the rest of my time in Europe I didn't worry about strange, stinky panhandlers. I stopped running the "what if" scenarios through my head and was determined to enjoy the time I spent overseas. However, I did feel much safer knowing that no matter what the situation, Mother would do anything to protect me, her purse always ready for action.

wonderful ending.