

# Short Paper 1.1: Schooldays Autobiography

engl 111 / sec. M / spring quarter 2005-06 / chang



The old adage (and now a cliché) says, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” And in this class, we will explore and analyze how cultural productions like an image or a story or a film are imagined, created, understood, and deployed. We are interested in questions like: How is an image or artifact seen and apprehended? What meanings can a cultural artifact convey, evoke, or cover up? What do images, advertisements, videos, t-shirt logos, song lyrics, news stories, novels, or narrative films tell us about our culture, our world? How can we critique and analyze these cultural productions and artifacts? Even the most everyday of artifacts, the most everyday of experiences, and the most everyday of choices can speak volumes and reveal the values, practices, arguments, and politics in these things.

To start this critical sequence, you are asked to take an image with which you are already well acquainted and familiar—your own. **Find a photograph of yourself**, preferably one where you are doing something, in an interesting setting, or showing a part of yourself, your identity. Choose a photo that might appear in a school yearbook, any grade, that shows us an interesting or memorable side of you. If you do not have ready access to a self-photo, you can use your university ID photo. Using the photo as a jumping off point, as inspiration, write a **3-page autobiography** of yourself relating a particular experience in school, with a teacher, or about a significant “learning” or “educational” experience. Think of this as a personal essay, a piece that might appear in a school yearbook or school newsletter.

Consider also the following questions (but do **not** feel obligated to answer all of them like a laundry list):

- What is in the photo? Or what is the photo about?
- Why was the photo taken? Who took the photo? Who is the photo for?
- What does photo tell us about you? What doesn’t it tell us?
- What does the photo tell us about your experiences in school, with learning, with teachers?
- What assumptions can be made about you via the photo? What stereotypes? Why are they relevant?
- Most importantly, what will you select to tell us? Why?

Remember that this is an autobiography, a personal profile, which means you are telling your audience and me **something memorable about yourself**. This autobiography also asks you to use an event from school, a significant educational experience (positive or negative) to reveal something about **who you are, what you do, and what is important to you**. Keep in mind that you only have three pages, less than a thousand words, to convey something of yourself. Use the photo as a way to **focus** your autobiography. Also keep in mind that this is an assignment, albeit informal, and will still require general formal paper conventions.

**Targeted outcomes:** 1, 3

**Turn in:** 34 inches, typed, no title page, proper heading, double-spaced, stapled copy of photo

**Due:** Wednesday, March 28