

CHAPTER 2

Types of Personal Narrative Questions

As you expose your students to the genre of the personal narrative, you should have them work with different types of narrative questions. Using the questions that colleges and universities ask on their applications is a good way to expose them to real world examples. Plus, being familiar with the different types of questions your students are going to be asked to respond to will help you understand the ways that you can help them prepare for their application essays.

College application questions range from general “tell us about you” questions to very specific and creative ones. Some students will write only one application essay while others will be inundated with many. The random examples cited below represent some of the questions colleges and universities have posed.

“You” Questions

- The Admissions Committee would like to know more about you in your own words. Please submit a brief essay, either autobiographical or creative, which you feel best describes you.

Georgetown University

- The Admission Committee would like to know some of the things that you are thinking, laughing, or talking about at this time in your life.

Southern Methodist University

- Compose a Personal Statement with content of your own choosing. In doing so, feel free to introduce yourself to us in any way you feel appropriate. Whether your essay is autobiographical or imaginative, it should reflect who you are in both form and content.

University of Notre Dame

- Since we are interested in who you are as well as what you can do, please briefly tell us about yourself. Please feel free to describe an experience to help you clarify your point.

Princeton University

- How is the person you know yourself to be different from the person your family and friends know you to be?

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- An application to MIT is much more than a set of test scores, grades and activities. It's often a reflection of an applicant's dreams and aspirations, dreams shaped by the worlds we inhabit. We'd like to know a bit more about your world. Describe the world you come from, for example your family, clubs, school, community, city, or town. How has that world shaped your dreams and aspirations?

- Life brings many disappointments as well as satisfactions. Could you tell us about a time in your life when you experienced disappointment, or faced difficult or trying circumstances? How did you react?

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Upbeat, Creative Questions

- If you were president of the United States for a day, what one policy—whether serious or semi-serious—would you implement? Why?
- The memoir has become an increasingly popular genre among American writers. For example, Carolina's own Charles Kuralt named his *Life on the Road*; Mia Hamm called hers *Go for the Goal: A Champion's Guide to Winning in Soccer and Life*. If you were to write a memoir that covered your life from birth through high school, what would you choose for your title? Why?

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- Design your own monument. (Case in point: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was designed by college student Maya Lin Ying, who at age 21 was commissioned to design the memorial after competing nationally for the honor.) Now it is your turn to immortalize a moment, an event, a person, a generation, an icon. Describe what your national monument would commemorate or celebrate. (This question is meant to both stimulate your creativity and allow you to distinguish yourself from other applicants!)

George Washington University