

Hello S2, I hope you have been enjoying working your way through this unit on personal writing. There is a lot of work to get through but I would now like you to get to the stage of planning, writing and editing your own personal piece.

Send completed essays to me at
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Ms Russell

S2 Personal Writing Unit

'Schooldays'



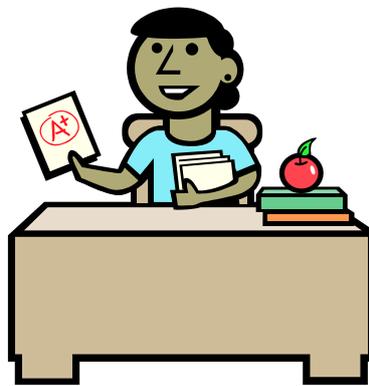
Assignment one (3-04a, 3-05a)

Listening and Watching

Watch the video of Sean Paul talking about his favourite teacher and answer the following questions.

<http://certificationmap.com/teacher-appreciation-week-celebrities-their-favorite-teachers/>

1. What subject did Sean Paul's favourite teacher teach?
2. How did she spot his talent?
3. Why does he appreciate the way she reacted to his behaviour?



Assignment two - Group Task (3-09a)

Read the following extracts, all of which focus on schooldays.



1. We was out with the teacher once...an' I saw this fantastic bird, all coloured it was, like dead out of place round our way. I was just gonna shout an' tell Miss but this kid next to me said "keep your mouth shut or she'll make us write an essay on it". (From 'Educating Rita')

2. See, if I started taking school seriously I would have had to become different from me mates an' that's not allowed. (From 'Educating Rita')

PERSONAL REFLECTIVE WRITING

Assignment 3 continued - MY FAVOURITE TEACHER

Think about your favourite teacher, preferably from primary school. Ask yourself the following questions. Again, write down the first thing that comes into your head and, if you can't think of a complete answer, move on.

Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his eyes.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his hair.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his face.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his build.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his voice.		Observation
Write down three words or phrases to describe her/his clothes.		Observation
Write down something she/he used to say often.		Observation
Write down three things you associate with her/his classroom.		Observation
Write down the most important thing she/he taught you.		Reflection
Write down three things to describe how your teacher made you feel.		Reflection
Write down three reasons why she/he is your favourite teacher.		Reflection



Assignment Four - HOW TO REVEAL WHAT PEOPLE ARE LIKE (3-19a)

In S1, you are likely to have learned about the four methods of revealing character. Can you remember what they are?

Writers use these methods to show what a person is like. For example, if you wanted to show that someone is evil, you could have them say and do nasty things. These are the two most common ways of showing what people are like. Rather than telling e.g 'Ryan was a repulsive boy', it is more interesting to show their personality through their actions and words.

A CLASSROOM INCIDENT.....

Read the extract below which takes place in a classroom. Think about how we learn what the people in the story are like.

The teacher tapped rhythmically on her computer. She had that look which suggested she didn't want to be disturbed. Stephen listened to the sound intently while his classmates scribbled away in their jotters. He really wanted to be doing his Close Reading too but as his glasses were broken he could not read a single word on the question paper.

"You got a rubber, Steff?" asked John. Stephen put his hand into his inside pocket, pulled out a clean little eraser and handed it to John.

"Ta."

"What's the answer to number three?" asked Susan

"Dunno, I'm only at number one" replied John, "Ask Steff"

Susan looked at Stephen. He shrugged his shoulders and said "I don't know what the passage is about - sorry!"

Stephen tested his eyesight with his question paper. He brought it closer to his face but the words became more blurred and his eyes felt strained. He decided to give this idea up and could think of no other work to do without his glasses. Sighing, he returned to listening to the tapping of the keyboard.

ASSIGNMENT FOUR

- a) What do you learn about Stephen through
 - i) His actions
 - ii) His words
 - iii) Other characters' reactions
- b) What do we learn about other people in the extract?
- c) Look closely at the actions and words of Stephen and John.

What are the differences between them and how are they revealed?



Assignment five - Recreating convincing impressions of personal experience (3-19a)

You have been thinking about what makes a teacher stand out in your memory and you have tried to identify a teacher (or assistant, or janitor) from your primary school days who you feel made a difference to your life. It will soon be time for you to try to describe your memories of this person, reflecting on what it was about them which made them stand out. However, before you begin writing, we are going to look at some of the techniques authors use to recreate experiences effectively.

In the following extract, Andrea Ashworth, author of 'Once in a House on Fire', writes about her first day at secondary school.

1. Look at the extract below and try to select **three** descriptions which you find particularly powerful or memorable or unusual.

Bells clanged. Faces crowded along corridors. Black, brown, mustardy, sock-white and milky pink. Only the eyes stood out, during the first week, in two darting sorts: sly ones slit and on the lookout for a touch of softness to rough up; round ones, blinking wide, nowhere to hide. Break times were exhausting: trying to look tough but not terrifying, straining to check the smiles that would provoke slap attacks by lads and lanky girls who stalked down the corridors, scowling at the world. It was like being dropped into one of the wildlife programmes that used to hold my stepfather spellbound in his armchair: fierce cats lurking behind bushes, muscles poised to pounce on knock-kneed deer.

I had to turn my shakiness inside-out, letting it tremble under my skin. If I had started school on time, I could have panicked with everyone else; now there was nowhere for nerves to blend in. All the other first-year kids, who must have been as wobbly as me a fortnight ago, had been stapled into their fates. Coming from local primary schools, everyone could boast someone who belonged to them, whether they liked them or not. Coming from Canada, carrying traces of a watery accent, I had nothing but curiosity on my side.

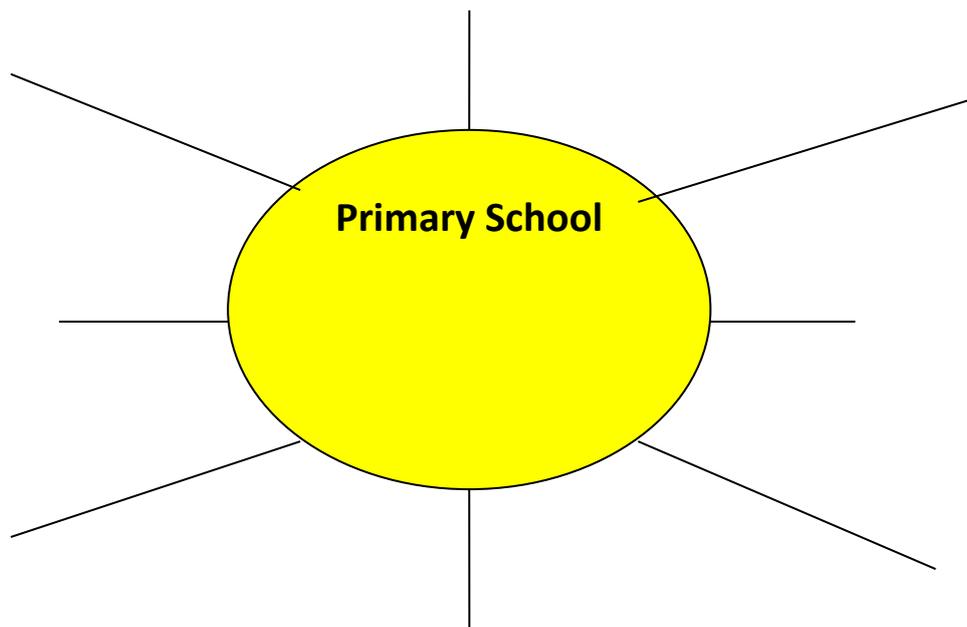
"Go on, say summat!" Porridgey-faced kids sidled up at an angle, to avoid catching the disease that made you stick out like a sore thumb.

"Don't be soft!" I roughed up my 'o's, yanked my 'a's flat, and stretched my 'I's as wide as they would go. Ripping the bottom out of my 'u's, I uttered everything from my guts. "I'm from flippin' Rusholme, I am."

2. For each of your choices you should complete the following task:

- Identify what language technique is being used. You can choose from the following list: simile, metaphor, alliteration, sentence length, word choice (particularly verbs and adjectives)
- Analyse what makes the examples effective. What do they make you feel, think, imagine?

Having considered what techniques you can use to recreate an experience convincingly, you should now try to jot down (in the form of a mind-map) some details which really remind you of what it felt like to be in your primary school. This will provide a realistic setting and atmosphere for your account. Try to focus on all five senses as you do this.



Model Essay 1

It was the first day back after summer. It was a pleasant sunny day, and the bright classroom was lit with the yellow glow of summer. We were noisy and excitable, comparing shiny new schoolbags and pencils and pencil cases. Our crisp white shirts marked us out as the oldest in the school; cool, aloof and serenely superior to the rest of the school in their polo tops and sweatshirts.

We found desks with our best friends and sat down, ostentatiously unpacking pristine stationery and chattering cheerfully. Silence fell, however, when our new teacher entered. She was very small, just a few inches taller than most of us, and fairly slim. She had brown hair cut in a bob and a dark complexion.

"Good morning" she said cheerily. "Now tell me; does anyone here like to read?" There was silence as she looked at us hopefully. A few tentative hands were raised. "Hmmm..." she said, surveying us worriedly. "How about writing?" Even fewer hands went up, accompanied by a few derisive snorts. Swiftly changing tack, she introduced herself as Ms Munro, putting emphasis on the "mizz", something that would be of a source of ardent speculation as the year progressed, along with a curious secrecy about her current life. We were used to teachers bombarding us with tales of their weekends; and her firm refusal to do this was a mystery.

We soon forgot about this, however, as she began to teach. Her lessons were an adventure. Every week, she gave us a new writing task: whether it was an air-raid poem, a school story or a warning letter from a school to the parents of an unruly child, we set to it, a hush falling over the classroom as we scribbled frantically. I was anxious to finish, and read her red-inked comments, or to see the flash of a shiny star sticker. Even maths was enjoyable, for most of us anyway. For those who found it easy, the weekly oral maths test were a short cut to a well-done smile from the teacher, and a warm glow of pride. However, when it was the turn of the "learning support group" as we kindly dubbed them, blank bewildered gazes from the pupils and an awkward, puzzled silence prevailed. Ms Munro alternated between gentle cajoling and frustrated outbursts, while the rest of the class fidgeted impatiently, attempting to relay the answer to the unfortunate victim using a primitive form of semaphore. We felt partly relieved that we were not suffering this ritual humiliation, and partly smug with our own sense of being a member of the intelligent, the elite.

Eventually Ms Munro would give up, and move thankfully on to our class project. During the first few months it was the rain forest, and we always seemed to work on it on a sunny afternoon. I remember many long, drowsy afternoons spent gazing out of the window to the clear blue sky, as I read about rain forest tribes, the canopies filled with chirruping rainbow coloured birds and hooting monkeys. On one particularly sweltering afternoon, Ms Munro took us on an important walk, supposedly to draw leaves, but really just to get out the classroom.

Even more enjoyable was the cold winter mornings. The classroom would feel cosy and well-lit as we looked out at the pewter clouds and the silver frosty glass. These were the mornings I loved the most, bent over my writing jotter crafting a story about a poor evacuee girl in World War II, or possibly a ghost story, which gave me particular pleasure. Whatever the task, I always felt safe and comfortable under the watchful gaze of Ms Munro, who occasionally handed round the tin of chocolates she stashed in the cupboard. She often went off on a tangent when talking about her interests, which included Gordon Brown, healthy eating and importance of reading. What should have been a five minute talk became an hour long class debate. Not that we complained, as we watched the minutes spent on maths slowly dwindling away.

Not that she was always cheerful and talkative. She berated us angrily for a whole range of offences, and particularly enjoyed comparing her supposedly angelic previous class with our flaws and failings. We received an irate lecture from her for singing "Happy Birthday" to a member of the other class. When we didn't cotton on to her jokes promptly enough, she would sign and tell us that we'd better become more like her last class before her patience ran out.

However, we could easily forgive these minor blips, for by the next day she was usually back to her old self, holding long philosophical debates on the hazards of smoking, or the failings of various politicians. She made fun of the patronizing questions in our maths books, and lectured us about being prepared for high school. Then suddenly there were just a few weeks left before the summer holidays, and we rushed around writing articles for the yearbook and designing front covers. As we left the classroom on our last day of primary school, she wrote us each a personal message in our Yearbooks, and gave us a hug.

After the summer, we moved to the high school. It was large, confusing and anonymous; frightening in comparison to our cosy, friendly primary schools. The new registration teacher was strict and unfriendly, and the cheerful, drowsy days in Ms Munro's classroom were swallowed up by the cold, drizzly autumn mornings in our dark registration classroom. But sometimes I relived those safe happy times, where our only worry was learning how to do long multiplication. I missed our writing sessions on a Tuesday morning, gazing out of the window for inspiration. At the same time, though, I knew that I was growing out of the school, with its over-protective rules, and corridors that began to feel narrow and claustrophobic. Despite our old classroom being a haven of security and laughter, we were ready to move on to a harsher, more independent world; but our year with Ms Munro was one I'll never forget.

Model Essay 2

She had straight, straw-blond hair that sprang out sharply from her ears, and stopped abruptly at her shoulder. She wore modern, silver rimmed glasses which magnified small, black eyes that shone intensely when she smiled, and glittered when she laughed. She'd enter the school grounds from an autumnal October day with her hair wind-swept; a black umbrella whose spokes jutted at odd angles and a big leather handbag tucked snugly under her arm. Her arms always appeared to be open to you; beckoning for you to come and learn from her. She held the door to her warm, kind classroom open and smiled at each of you as you trooped in; making everyone of her children feel like her special favourite.

Spelling or defining a word correctly only strengthened her love for you. She didn't shout – there was never a need to. You all worked hard in her class - even maths was like an adventure; a discovery waiting to happen with Mrs Johnstone. Sometimes you'd look up from your jotter to see her observing you from her desk; a faint smile on her face; a loving look in her eye. Dictionaries sat comfortably on a shelf behind your desk. Blackboards arched squarely – a greenish tinge to their dark faces – at the back of the class. Red sugar paper with a yellow fringe boasted the names of exceptionally good readers and ceramic bowls of cheerful red apples for us to paint. Your partner drew rude shapes and you giggled; your shiny black school tights coiled round the legs of your chair.

The paint was cleaned away, and a chosen few were allowed to take the pots to the chipped off-white sink and scrape the tick, messy paints off the pots, while Mrs Johnstone settled with your chosen class book – now referred to as a “novel”. Exciting tales rushed through your mind as people cried, laughed, screamed and existed in this strangely adult plot. One of the girls in green who wore lots of gold jewellery whispered if it was okay to play with your hair, and you nodded, firmly lodged within the novel's fresh pages.

The bell sang and you breathed a sigh of relief, for it dawned on you that you were tired and hungry, and you rushed out to greet your parents; full of the excitements of today, your paint splashed fingers clutching important letters to inform your parents of in-service days.

Days in Mrs Johnstone's class brushed past your ears like crisp, winter leaves, and you found yourself in a new school, with a new teacher with a new set off wishes. You didn't like this new teacher; her hair was a cropped muddy brown, and her lips a brown sludge of a sneer. She called the violets the “red group”, and refused to believe...(essay tails off)



Assignment 6 - Writing Task (3-27a, 3-30a)



Having spent some time considering what you think are the qualities of a good teacher, you are now going to write about your own experiences...

Task - Write reflectively on a person from your primary school.

Note that this person should be an adult, so, if not a teacher, it might be a classroom assistant or a janitor. In the essay, you should use the techniques which we have been studying to convey character and to create atmosphere.

Remember to spend some time planning your essay carefully.

When you have finished writing, you should complete the self-assessment pages in your Profile booklet.

