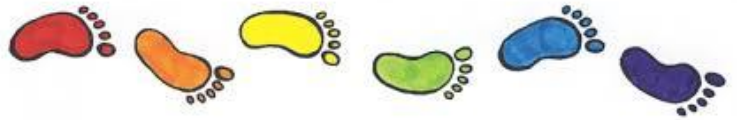


## Reflective: Step by Step

As the title suggests, a personal reflective essay basically demands you to discuss personal insights about a personal experience. One could also think of a reflective essay as a tool for self-assessment since they demand a unique perspective from you which you state by reflecting upon an experience(s) in your life.

### What you need to do...



1. Choose a topic in which you can write *genuinely* about - one that will enable you to reflect on your personality and the things that are important to you.
2. Think carefully about what experiences / memories to include. Consider creating a mind-map of possibilities.
3. Spend time developing imagery (similes/metaphors/personification) to describe your emotions and/or the situation.
4. **PLAN** – *don't miss this step out!* A well-structured essay will think about the most effective way to tell your story. Chronological? Flashbacks? Key reflection at the end/start?
5. Write your essay. (Remember, this is all about style. Push your vocabulary; make your word choice emotive; vary your sentence structure and make use of imagery.)
6. Rainbow mark according to Success criteria.

## Topic Prompts

*Struggling for ideas...?*



- What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the hardest thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the happiest thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the saddest thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the most frightening thing that has ever happened to you?
- What is the strangest thing that has ever happened to you?
- A person....
  - who has most influenced you;
  - who has most helped you;
  - who has most hurt you;
  - that you miss most;
  - that you are most glad to be rid of.

## Success Criteria



- “Very good creativity... language is varied and often used to create particular effects...”
  - Used emotive word choice,
  - Created imagery,
  - Used an ambitious vocabulary,
  - Used ‘show, don’t tell’,
  - Used the senses in your descriptions,
  - Varied sentence structure for effect.
- “The structure of the piece enhances the purpose/meaning...”
  - Paragraphs have a clear order and link fluently;
  - Thought given to impact of structure.
- “Feelings/reactions/experiences are explored with a very good degree of selfawareness/involvement/insight/sensitivity”
  - Reflected on your experience/feelings/character with maturity and honesty.

## Example...

### *Letter to Daniel*

Letter to Daniel was written by BBC correspondent Fergal Keane to his newborn son back in 1997. The letter combines the memories of a man in his role as a foreign correspondent, then working in Hong Kong, with the reflections of a recent father.

#### **Hong Kong, February 1996**

My dear son, it is six o'clock in the morning on the island of Hong Kong. You are asleep cradled in my left arm and I am learning the art of one-handed typing. Your mother, more tired yet more happy than I've ever known her, is sound asleep in the room next door and there is a soft quiet in our apartment.

Since you've arrived, days have melted into night and back again and we are learning a new grammar, a long sentence whose punctuation marks are feeding and winding and nappy changing and these occasional moments of quiet.

When you're older we'll tell you that you were born in Britain's last Asian colony in the lunar year of the pig and that when we brought you home, the staff of our apartment block gathered to wish you well. "It's a boy, so lucky, so lucky. We Chinese love boys," they told us. One man said you were the first baby to be born in the block in the year of the pig. This, he told us, was good Feng Shui, in other words a positive sign for the building and everyone who lived there.

Naturally your mother and I were only too happy to believe that. We had wanted you and waited for you, imagined you and dreamed about you and now that you are here no dream can do justice to you. Outside the window, below us on the harbour, the ferries are ploughing back and forth to Kowloon. Millions are already up and moving about and the sun is slanting through the tower blocks and out on to the flat silver waters of the South China Sea. I can see the trail of a jet over Lamma Island and, somewhere out there, the last stars flickering towards the other side of the world.

We have called you Daniel Patrick but I've been told by my Chinese friends that you should have a Chinese name as well and this glorious dawn sky makes me think we'll call you Son of the Eastern Star. So that later, when you and I are far from Asia, perhaps standing on a beach some evening, I can point at the sky and tell you of the Orient and the times and the people we knew there in the last years of the twentieth century.

Your coming has turned me upside down and inside out. So much that seemed essential to me has, in the past few days, taken on a different colour. Like many foreign correspondents I know, I have lived a life that, on occasion, has veered close to the edge: war zones, natural disasters, darkness in all its

shapes and forms.

In a world of insecurity and ambition and ego, it's easy to be drawn in, to take chances with our lives, to believe that what we do and what people say about us is reason enough to gamble with death. Now, looking at your sleeping face, inches away from me, listening to your occasional sigh and gurgle, I wonder how I could have ever thought glory and prizes and praise were sweeter than life.

And it's also true that I am pained, perhaps haunted is a better word, by the memory, suddenly so vivid now, of each suffering child I have come across on my journeys. To tell you the truth, it's nearly too much to bear at this moment to even think of children being hurt and abused and killed. And yet, looking at you, the images come flooding back. Ten-year-old Andi Mikail dying from napalm burns on a hillside in Eritrea, how his voice cried out, growing ever more faint when the wind blew dust on to his wounds. The two brothers, Domingo and Juste, in Menongue, southern Angola. Juste, two years old and blind, dying from malnutrition, being carried on seven-year-old Domingo's back. And Domingo's words to me, "He was nice before, but now he has the hunger."

Last October, in Afghanistan, when you were growing inside your mother, I met Sharja, aged twelve. Motherless, fatherless, guiding me through the grey ruins of her home, everything was gone, she told me. And I knew that, for all her tender years, she had learned more about loss than I would likely understand in a lifetime.

There is one last memory, of Rwanda, and the churchyard of the parish of Nyarubuye where, in a ransacked classroom, I found a mother and her three young children huddled together where they'd been beaten to death. The children had died holding on to their mother, that instinct we all learn from birth and in one way or another cling to until we die.

Daniel, these memories explain some of the fierce protectiveness I feel for you, the tenderness and the occasional moments of blind terror when I imagine anything happening to you. But there is something more, a story from long ago that I will tell you face to face, father and son, when you are older. It's a very personal story but it's part of the picture. It has to do with the long lines of blood and family, about our lives and how we can get lost in them and, if we're lucky, find our way out again into the sunlight.

It begins thirty-five years ago in a big city on a January morning with snow on the ground and a woman walking to the hospital to have her first baby. She is in her early twenties and the city is still strange to her, bigger and noisier than the easy streets and gentle hills of her distant home. She's walking because there is no money and everything of value has been pawned to pay for the alcohol to which her husband has become addicted.

On the way, a taxi driver notices her sitting, exhausted and cold, in the doorway of a shop and he takes

her to hospital for free. Later that day, she gives birth to a baby boy and, just as you are to me, he is the best thing she has ever seen. Her husband comes that night and weeps with joy when he sees his son. He is truly happy. Hungover, broke, but in his own way happy, for they were both young and in love with each other and their son.

But, Daniel, time had some bad surprises in store for them. The cancer of alcoholism ate away at the man and he lost his family. This was not something he meant to do or wanted to do, it just was. When you are older, my son, you will learn about how complicated life becomes, how we can lose our way and how people get hurt inside and out. By the time his son had grown up, the man lived away from his family, on his own in a one-roomed flat, living and dying for the bottle.

He died on the fifth of January, one day before the anniversary of his son's birth, all those years before in that snowbound city. But his son was too far away to hear his last words, his final breath, and all the things they might have wished to say to one another were left unspoken.

Yet now, Daniel, I must tell you that when you let out your first powerful cry in the delivery room of the Adventist Hospital and I became a father, I thought of your grandfather and, foolish though it may seem, hoped that in some way he could hear, across the infinity between the living and the dead, your proud statement of arrival. For if he could hear, he would recognize the distinct voice of family, the sound of hope and new beginnings that you and all your innocence and freshness have brought to the world.