

Angeline Vo
UWP 1, Hsiao
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My Personal Literacy Narrative is a strong piece because it is personal to me. Some of the strengths present in my letter include the use of personal anecdotes, vulnerability with the reader, and imagery. I am proud of my work, but I acknowledge that at every stage, a written piece is always a work in process. Some of my letter's weaknesses are the flow of the letter, redundancies, grammatical mistakes, and the use of run-on sentences. Despite these weaknesses, I enjoyed writing my letter and am proud of it. Writing this letter allowed me to reflect on the illiteracy I wrote about between me and my father. I appreciate the opportunity this assignment gave me to write about my experiences, consider the different literacies I use, and how communicating and understanding others is about so much more than language. However, I will admit that I struggled to write this Personal Literacy Narrative because of how vulnerable it is. My first draft looks extremely different from this draft because I was worried about having to have a peer read something so personal to me. It also is extremely different because I had a hard time verbalizing and writing down some of these experiences. It wasn't just because of how vulnerable the stories are, but because I wanted the reader to feel how I felt and understand my perspective.

In addition to making personal revisions, I also considered my peer feedback. The largest concern that my peer reviewer mentioned was the flow of the paper. Although I still think the flow of my paper could use some work, I have revised my paper with smoother transitions in mind. I worked to make my paper more cohesive rather than jumping from anecdote to anecdote. I believe that my flow has improved from my first draft. My peer reviewer also suggested defining emotional literacy in my thesis paragraph/statement and doing more reflection on how my literacy has developed and changed. I considered her advice and reflected more on the change in my literacy, however, after consideration, I have decided against defining emotional literacy. I can see where my peer reviewer was coming from, but I decided that strictly defining emotional literacy would restrict my narrative. Allowing myself room to define emotional literacy throughout the paper rather than once in the beginning helped me develop a more complex and compelling letter.

If I could do this assignment again, I would give myself more time. I would revise my paper more and get more input from more peers and instructors. Overall though, I am happy with my Personal Literacy Narrative.

Letter to Ba

Ba,

I remember how you would take me to Vietnamese school every Saturday morning. I would complain, pretend I was sick, or try to cry my way out of going, but you always managed to get me in the car. The silence made the drive long. I would close my eyes and try to find comfort in the sounds of the early San Francisco traffic, knowing I would be stuck in a classroom being judged for my poor Vietnamese for the next six hours. Before I'd leave the car you'd stop me and tell me "Con, you do this so we can understand each other more. You will understand Ba Ba when you are big."

Ba, there is more to understanding than just language. To truly understand, you don't just speak at one another. I understand the words coming out of your mouth, yet I don't understand how you developed these thoughts and points of view or how we grew to be so different. We lack compassion and emotional literacy, but as we both get older, we grow and learn more about one another. We grow more compassionate towards each other and that compassion bridges this emotional illiteracy, bringing us closer together.

We are working on bridging this gap, but when I was little, we were always close. Mom always tells me about how I refused to sleep until you came home and rocked me when I was a few months old. Before I knew what language was, I knew love for you. Then, as I got older, you became my first best friend. We would wander, discovering San Francisco together, singing Vietnamese nursery rhymes, not caring who heard. It was you and me against the world, Ba. Then, that night came. I remember it vividly, I was doing homework at the salon waiting for Mom to finish up. Then, you called Mom's cell phone and I picked it up. You sounded tired on the other side and all you could say was, "I'm sorry, Con. Ba xin lỗi Con. Ba is going to be gone, take care of Mẹ and em for Ba Ba, you are a big girl now." Mom told me you were going to school to learn new things to help the family, but I wasn't dumb, Ba. I knew you were in jail. I didn't understand because in school, we learn that bad guys go to jail and on TV, we see that the villains get locked up. I couldn't help but ask myself if you are the bad guy, Ba? This was the

first crack in our strong foundation and while you were gone, this crack turned into a chasm. Before you went in, I was barely a first grader and by the time I saw you again, I was thinking about what middle school I was going to apply to. I wasn't that little girl you knew anymore and it made me nervous because what if you weren't the Ba I knew anymore?

By the time you came home, things were different. We didn't have that close knit bond anymore because you were different. I had to ask myself if you truly changed or if I was old enough now to see who you really are. Aaron got the luxury of not knowing you before this. He was only a few months old when you went in. He only knew you from the pictures along the mantel and the stories everyone would tell. He will never understand the disappointment of knowing things would never be the same. You were gone for so long, then you just came back into our lives, and maybe we were both naive for thinking that time froze for us and everything would be the same. You were not the Ba I knew and I didn't understand why— I didn't understand you.

Aaron, however, I understand this man to the tee. He is sociable, sweet, goofy— he is the likable sibling, I know he is. Everyone loves him and I have always blamed you for that Ba. I know why he's likable, it's because he is kind, he thinks about how his actions impact people, he is selfless, and gentle. He is everything I wish I could be, but you raised me to be tough, you raised me to never take shit. Aaron wears his heart on his sleeve, willing to care about others and let them in, while I build walls not letting anyone close enough so I don't have to worry about protecting myself and can focus on protecting those I love. You taught me this and I resent you for it. What if I wanted to let people in, Ba? Now all I do is prepare for the worst and take the soft, gentle moments that life gives us for granted. I see what you did to me and who you are, so I make sure that Aaron never becomes you... Never becomes me.

Ba, do you remember the day Aaron got sent home from school for hitting some kid in the head with his full 40 ounce metal water bottle? He claimed he was protecting these girls because the boy was bullying them. I couldn't believe it. How could he do something so violent, so cruel? I asked him why and all he could say was that is what taught him to do: hit first, think later. Those words alone made me see red. I thought I lost him. All this time I spent protecting him from

becoming like us was stupid. I should have known you would've gotten to him and I hated myself for trying, but in that moment, Ba, I hated you more.

I confronted you, "Why would you do that? Why would you teach him that? He's just a kid, you don't teach kids that here." You looked at me, I saw the anger in your eyes, and you said, "Con, you don't understand, you have to show people not to mess with you. You don't understand me?" In that moment, I couldn't believe how dumb you were teaching my little brother violence. I was angry, I yelled, "Is that what they teach you in jail, huh? Or did you learn that when you were alone in Vietnam?" I regretted it instantly. I saw sadness and betrayal replace the anger in your eyes. You just walked away. I knew I was wrong, the Ba I knew was still there and I just hurt him. I'm sorry I said what I said, Ba.

Now I know you were trying to teach Aaron to protect himself and those around him the best you could, just like how you did with me. I'm older now and I know more about you. I know that Ba Noi left you in Vietnam while taking your five siblings to America. I know that your uncles and cousins beat you when they were supposed to take care of you back in Vietnam. I know that when you came to America you were the odd one out. I know you found community and protection in gang life. I see you now, Ba. You did the best you could and I'm sorry I took that for granted. You tried your best to communicate and understand us, but you grew up differently. I blamed you for raising us a certain way, but now I see that you tried to give us all the love, protection, and compassion that you never had.

As a kid, I would follow you to the ends of the world. I was naive and thought you were perfect, I didn't know better. As I got a little older and you were gone, all I could see were your flaws. I was naive and saw the world in black and white, I didn't know better. Now, I see you for you. You are not perfect, but you try for us. I am naive and I know that now, but I am trying my best to learn and do better.

I am big now, Ba. I need you to know that there was no language barrier.

You're Vietnamese always met halfway with mine and my English met halfway with yours. We managed to understand the broken pieces of English and Vietnamese awkwardly strung

together. No amount of proper grammar, perfect sentences, or Vietnamese school could fill the lack of compassion and understanding. Our emotional illiteracy made us temporarily lose each other. Thank you for making an effort to teach, unlearn, and learn with me. I am grateful for the effort we both put into bridging this emotional literacy gap and learning to communicate with one another and understand each other more.

I love you,
Angeline.