

Autobiography Do's and Don'ts

Do:

Autobiography is a kind of self-portrait. It's not about what you did, it's about who you are. Find a story to tell that has something to say about you and the way you are.

Think about structure: You need to impose, if not 3-act structure, then at least some kind of cadence or rhythm on events that may not have had any structure at all.

Be tough with yourself and be honest about your role in events and how others act towards you.

Don't:

Don't just write an anecdote, that is, don't just tell a funny story you would tell at a party. You'll end up with a "you had to be there" kind of feeling.

Don't rely on narration too much (where the images just illustrate a story you're narrating). There are lots of options here: only dialogue, modest narration augmented by dialogue, full narration with images showing contrasting image narration.

Don't be self-indulgent: avoid self-aggrandizing and also self-pity.

Avoid clichéd conclusions or morals. In fact, avoid morals entirely. If there's a lesson to be learned, let it be understood by your readers rather than telling them outright.

Assignment:

Write a 2-3 page story in thumbnail form about an event that changed you in some way. But please please please make it a SMALL change. You can't adequately cover your feelings about a death of a person close to you or a divorce of parents or something like that in 2-3 pages. Try to think of something like when you changed your mind about something, or maybe changed your clothes.

Suggested Further Reading:

R. Crumb & Harvey Pekar, *Bob and Harv's Comics*

Robert Crumb, various, such as *Self-Loathing*

Julie Doucet, *New York Diary*

Debbie Drechsler, *Daddy's Girl*

Chester Brown, *I Never Liked You, The Playboy, The Little Man*

Spain Rodriguez, *My True Story*

Justin Green *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*

John Porcellino *A Perfect Example*

James Kochalka *Sketchbook Diaries* and others

Manix *Sketchbook #3* and others

Evan Dorkin *Dork #7*