

## Sample Reflection 1: "Hand-Me-Downs" Essay Student Letter

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Professor Kelli Wood  
9570 Gateway Blvd. North  
El Paso, TX 79924

Dear Professor Wood:

Writing my emblematic essay about my wrestling shoes turned out to be way more emotional than I expected. I thought it would be easy since I know my own story so well, but putting it into words that would make sense to other people was actually pretty challenging.

**What Went Well:** The prewriting exercises really helped me dig deeper into what the shoes meant to me. In Prewriting 1, when I had to describe every detail I could think of, I discovered things I'd forgotten—like how the Asics stitching was coming unraveled and how the inside was that ugly olive green color. Those specific details ended up being really important in my final essay because they helped readers picture exactly what these beat-up shoes looked like.

The narrative part came pretty naturally to me since I'm used to telling this story to friends. I think I did a good job with the flashback structure, jumping from the tournament back to when my dad first gave me the shoes, then forward to the championship match. My writing group said the pacing kept them engaged, especially during the final match scene.

I'm also proud of how I connected the shoes to my relationship with my dad. Instead of just saying "these shoes are important to me," I was able to show how they represented his coaching, his support, and all the family history of wrestling success. The moment when I realized he wasn't just my coach but also my dad felt like a strong ending.

**What Was Challenging:** The biggest struggle was figuring out how much background information to include. I kept wanting to explain every detail about wrestling rules and tournament formats, but then I'd lose focus on the shoes themselves. I probably rewrote my introduction four times trying to find the right balance. I ended up asking my roommate to read it, and she helped me realize that readers don't need to understand wrestling to understand what the shoes meant to me.

I also struggled with the "so what" part that you mentioned in class. At first, my reflection on the shoes' significance felt kind of surface-level—just "they brought me good luck." It wasn't until I really thought about my dad's voice in my head during the match that I realized the shoes represented his belief in me and all his life lessons about persistence. That deeper meaning took a while to figure out.

**What Helped Me Work Through Difficulties:** Talking with you during our conference was huge. When you asked me "What would someone who's never wrestled understand about why these shoes matter?" it made me realize I needed to focus more on the universal themes of family support and overcoming challenges rather than getting caught up in wrestling details.

I also found it helpful to read my draft out loud to myself. There were places where I'd written in this weird formal voice that didn't sound like me at all. Reading aloud helped me catch those spots and rewrite them to sound more natural and personal.

The writing center tutor also pointed out that my conclusion felt rushed. She helped me see that I could expand on that final moment with my dad to really drive home the emotional significance of the whole experience.

**Plans for Improvement:** For my next essay, I want to work on my organization from the very beginning instead of trying to fix it later. I think if I spend more time on an outline, I won't have to do as much major restructuring during revision.

I also want to get better at incorporating dialogue. I used some in this essay, but I could have done more to capture my dad's voice and personality through his actual words rather than just summarizing what he said.

Finally, I plan to visit the writing center earlier in my process next time. I waited until I had a complete draft, but I think getting feedback on just my introduction or a single paragraph might help me catch problems before they spread through the whole essay.

This essay taught me that writing about personal experiences requires just as much craft and revision as any other kind of writing. Just because I lived it doesn't mean I automatically know how to write about it effectively. I'm looking forward to applying what I learned to the research essay we're starting next.

Sincerely,  
Miranda Pace-England

**AI Disclosure:** I used ChatGPT to help me brainstorm questions to ask myself about what made my writing process challenging, but all the experiences and reflections I describe are completely my own.

### Rubric Feedback for Miranda's Reflection

Criteria	Performance Level & Description	Explanation
<b>Depth of Self-Analysis</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of own writing process; moves beyond surface observations to genuine insight	Miranda shows deep understanding of her writing process, recognizing how personal familiarity with a story doesn't automatically translate to effective writing. She identifies the challenge of balancing insider knowledge with reader accessibility—a sophisticated insight for a freshman writer.
<b>Specific Examples &amp; Details</b>	<b>Emerging (B):</b> Generally uses specific examples to support reflections; adequate detail about writing experience	She provides concrete examples (rewriting introduction 4 times, specific prewriting discoveries like "ugly olive green color"), but could include more details about her revision process. The examples she gives clearly support her reflections about challenges and successes.
<b>Honest Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Thoughtfully identifies both strengths and areas for improvement; realistic and balanced assessment	Miranda demonstrates mature self-awareness, acknowledging both genuine strengths (narrative pacing, emotional connection) and real challenges (organization, surface-level analysis initially). Her assessment feels honest rather than trying to impress.
<b>Actionable Planning</b>	<b>Emerging (B):</b> Sets appropriate goals with some specific steps; plans are generally realistic and connected to reflection	Her goals are realistic and connected to identified challenges (earlier outlining, better dialogue, earlier writing center visits). Plans could be slightly more specific about implementation, but they show clear connection to her reflection.
<b>Clear Communication</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Well-organized, engaging reflection that effectively communicates insights; appropriate length and format	The letter format works well, organization is logical (what went well, challenges, solutions, plans), and her voice is engaging and authentic throughout. Meets length requirements with substantive content.
<b>Authentic Voice &amp; AI Disclosure</b>	<b>Advanced (A):</b> Maintains authentic personal voice throughout; appropriate and honest disclosure of AI assistance used	Voice feels genuinely hers—casual but thoughtful, specific to her experience. AI disclosure is honest and appropriate, showing she used it as a thinking tool while maintaining ownership of her reflections.

**Overall Grade Range: A- to B+** - This reflection demonstrates sophisticated metacognitive thinking with strong self-analysis and planning. Minor improvements in specificity and actionable steps could push it to solid A range.