

Name _____

Date _____

Personal Essay

A personal essay is a nonfiction essay in which an author expresses an opinion or provides some insight based on personal experiences. Authors have different purposes for writing a personal essay. Often it is to make others aware of an important issue or topic by connecting the topic to the author's own life.

Read the following personal essay and answer the questions.

Finding My Voice

I never planned to join the school choir. Music was just something that played in the background of my life—pleasant enough, but nothing special. That all changed on the day my English teacher, Ms. Rivera, overheard me humming while working on a group project.

"You have a nice voice," she said, stopping by our table.

"Have you ever thought about joining choir?"

I laughed nervously and shook my head. The thought of standing on stage, with everyone looking at me, made my stomach twist into knots. I had spent most of middle school trying to blend in, to become invisible whenever possible. I was the quiet kid who sat in the back row and rarely raised my hand.

But Ms. Rivera wouldn't let it go. For weeks, she encouraged me to just try one choir practice. "What's the worst that could happen?" she asked. Eventually, I gave in,

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promising myself I would quit after the first day.

That first practice was terrifying. I stood at the back, barely opening my mouth, certain everyone could tell I didn't belong. But then something unexpected happened. As we began singing together, I felt a strange sense of belonging. My voice became just one thread in a beautiful tapestry of sound. I wasn't standing alone anymore—I was part of something bigger.

It's been two years since that first practice, and choir has become my favorite part of school. Last month, I even sang a short solo at our spring concert. My hands were shaking, but when I finished, the applause felt like a personal victory. Sometimes the things that scare us the most end up changing us for the better.

1. What is the main theme of this personal essay?

2. How does the author's attitude toward choir change throughout the essay?

3. What specific details does the author use to share their personal experience?

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Personal Essay-Answer Key

1. What is the main theme of this personal essay?

The main theme is overcoming fear and finding confidence through trying new experiences that take us outside our comfort zone.

2. How does the author's attitude toward choir change throughout the essay?

The author moves from seeing music as just "background" and feeling terrified about choir to making it their "favorite part of school" and performing a solo, showing growth in confidence.

3. What specific details does the author use to share their personal experience?

The author includes details like humming during a project, standing at the back during practice, feeling part of a "tapestry of sound," and having shaking hands during their solo performance.