Transforming Information into a Personal Narrative

You’ll notice these questions follow the most common elements of information, the “Five Ws and H” — who, what, where, when, why, and how.

The American writer Roy Peter Clark notes that people read for two reasons: information and experience. Notice the difference between the two.

Information—just the facts:

    On July 16, 2003, at Tucson International Airport, it rained one inch.

Personal Narrative—a story to tell:

    Watching the sandy soil drink up the one inch of rain, I realized what a stranger I was in the desert. I remembered the rich, green, eternally wet forests of the Smokey Mountains, my true home.

The first is a report; the second a story. Reports convey information. Stories create experiences. Stories transport the reader, crossing boundaries of time, space, and imagination. The report points us there. The story puts us there. Your task is to transform information into a personal narrative.

In this process of conversion:

    Who becomes Character.
    What becomes Action.
    Where becomes Setting.
    When becomes Chronology.
    Why becomes Cause or Motive.
    How becomes Process.

Keep in mind this process as you address each of the questions from the prompts. You must figure out when to provide information, craft a story, or use some combination of the two.