

## Assignment: Proleptic Autobiography

Educational researcher Sarah Hochstetler<sup>1</sup> theorizes that “the disconnect between the myths about being an English teacher and the reality of the English classroom likely contribute to low retention. Making space in a teacher education program for thinking about teacher identity is one way to address these misconceptions and thus better prepare students for a career in secondary English education” (p. 258). Similarly, Lindqvist, Nordänger, and Carlsson<sup>2</sup> imply that some portion of teachers who abandon the profession within their first five years were unable to even articulate their expectations for a career as a teacher (p. 100).

Therefore, to help you develop a clearer sense of your future as a secondary English Language Arts teacher and to increase the likelihood that you will persevere in the profession, you will compose a brief proleptic<sup>3</sup> autobiography of your early career as a classroom teacher.

The Assignment: The year is [current year + 5], and you have been working as a secondary English Language Arts teacher since your successful completion of a single-subject credential program. Look back on the early years of your teaching career and, in a chapter of your autobiography consisting of approximately 1000-1200 words, tell the story of your development as an educator. ***Be sure to compare the expectations you had for your future work as a teacher at the time you began your career with the reality you have experienced as a classroom teacher.***

You are free to discuss any aspects of your professional life, but you might want to consider some of the following topics:

1. The students you teach – demographic information (race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender identity, etc.); academic ability; special needs; English language proficiency
2. School setting – urban? suburban? rural? Where in your state? Or are you teaching elsewhere in the USA? Or abroad?
3. Curriculum – which grade level(s) do you teach? What kind of content do you teach? How much control do you have over what you teach?
4. Standardized exams, assessments, and accountability – how do these issues affect your teaching?
5. Administrators and colleagues – describe your relationships with your colleagues, your department chair, assistant principal, principal, superintendent, etc.
6. Work/Life balance – how do you manage or integrate your personal life/identity with your professional life/identity?

An excellent response will:

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<sup>1</sup> Hochstetler, S. (2011). Focus on identity development: A proposal for addressing English teacher attrition. *The Clearing House*, 84, 6. 256-259.

<sup>2</sup> Lindqvist, P., Nordänger, U.K., & Carlsson, R. (2014). Teacher attrition the first five years – A multifaceted image. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 40. 94-103.

<sup>3</sup> *proleptic* means “considering the past from the perspective of the future,” similar to a flash-forward; the opposite of *retrospective*

- ✓ Feature a clear structure and organization with a recognizable beginning that introduces the focus, a middle that supports and develops ideas, and a conclusion that wraps up your thoughts in an interesting and compelling manner.
- ✓ Compare/contrast your expectations with your (imagined) actual experience.
- ✓ Use specific details and examples to develop your ideas.
- ✓ Use precise diction to convey meaning clearly.
- ✓ Use grammar, punctuation, and spelling that facilitate meaning.
- ✓ Consist of at least 1000 words but no more than 1200 words (double-spaced).

**N.B.** Use your imagination to envision your future. Think of this as a work of creative, speculative non-fiction.