

Reflective Essay Sample

My Earliest Memory

Recalling one's earliest memories is no joke. We are not computers and knowing the exact sequence of one's memories is no small task—in fact, I think it is impossible. Also, we are easily affected by seeing media about our childhood and confusing that with memories. I have seen my tapes of me at around 3 years old and whatnot, and sometimes I mistakenly think memories of these tapes are original memories. Anyways, I think I recalled my first memory, and there were no photographs or videos taken at the time.

I believe I was in first grade (“Mechanicsburg Area School District”). The room was bright and full of children. We had made paper airplanes and were throwing them around the room, seeing whose airplanes would go the furthest—or not thinking at all and just throwing them around. Laughter, and the loud noises of children yelling and making funny noises. That is about it.

However, if I garner memories from media and the facts of life, I can proclaim a new first memory. But if we take “childhood amnesia” into account, it is not possible for me to have a real long-term memory about myself before the age of 7. Early in our childhood, the structures of our brain that create and sustain memories are not so well developed (Gammon, Kate). There are many theories as to why the brain develops in this way, but I think it has to do with not remembering all the falls, accidents, and other issues in one's childhood so one can grow up mentally stable.

Anyways, I know my first word was “choo choo,” because I lived next to a train station until I was three years old. I know that I used to go on the tire swing outside of our rickety house, and swing on it in the first three years of my life. I remember hitting my head as I crashed into my twin brother when running around the house—but that was after three years of age, when we moved to another house. However, I know of these happenings only from watching home videos.

It is clear that we forget more and more of our childhood as we age. For me to retain that around 7 years old I was throwing around paper airplanes in my first grade class is not uncommon: most adults cannot remember much before 5-7 years of age (Gammon, Kate). But I think I remembered this moment because it was very happy. Research shows that memories are more likely to stay if they are linked with strong emotions. I always enjoyed throwing around paper airplanes, but throwing them around with a bunch of classmates probably was an ecstatic moment.

Why are our first memories important? Not only are they novelties, but I think they are illustrative of who we are. I consider myself a generally positive person, and my first memory was happy. I think how we remember our childhood can be a key to knowing who we are at the moment. Countless people will tell you that the events that happened in their childhood affected them for the rest of their lives. These imprints on their lives are so significant and often out of their control. As Jess Cotton from The School of Life puts it, "We can tell that our imbalances date from the past because they reflect the way of thinking and instincts of the children we once were. Without anything pejorative being meant by this, our way of being unbalanced tends towards a fundamental immaturity, bearing the marks of what was once a young person's attempt to grapple with something utterly beyond their capacities. For example, when they suffer at the hands of an adult, children almost invariably take what happens to them as a reflection of something that must be very wrong with them" (The School of Life).

I recalled my first memory, and it was a happy one about throwing paper airplanes in my first grade class. It seems I generally generated good memories during childhood. I believe this prompted me to have a positive adult life. I wish I could remember more before this memory, but due to "childhood amnesia," it is not possible.