

English 101

Essay #2: Personal Growth and Success

Essay Length: 1000-1250 words (3-4 typed pages)

Background

Each of the four essays we have read deals with personal growth and success, and how our ideas about them are affected by our gender, ethnicity and class. The Mike Rose essay offers a personal story that shows how the type of education we get is determined by how smart our teachers think we are, and the Judith Cofer essay explores how our ethnicity and appearance affects how others treat us. The Tony Cade Bambara essay suggests that the limits of our success are determined by our class, while the Ann Garland essay offers a vision of success that does not rely on money or the status that it brings.

Topic

Write an essay in which you explore and analyze how your gender, class or ethnicity has affected your definition of success and what it means to be successful. You will need to use at least one outside text in your essay.

While your essay should focus on one identity category (gender, class or ethnicity), you will undoubtedly need to discuss the other two in your essay. Furthermore, in your essay you need to:

- Define what success means to you and explain how that definition has shaped your goals
- Explain how that definition of success has been transmitted to you through family, religion, school, and/or work
- Explain how that definition of success has been influenced by your gender, class and/or ethnicity

Hints

1. Read the topic a couple of times and note what it requires you to do. Complete all the tasks of the assignment.
2. Take time to plan and organize your essay before you begin to write. (Scratch outlines are often quite helpful.)
3. Be sure to start with a clear main idea. (In other words, make sure you can answer this question: “What is the main point I want my readers to understand?”)
4. Make sure that you support or illustrate general points with specific examples and vivid details from your own experience and from the text (when appropriate).
5. Allow yourself enough time after writing to go back over your essay, check for errors or omissions, and make any necessary corrections.