Narrative Essay Assignment: **FIRSTS**

Write an account of one of these “firsts”: your first serious argument with your parents, your first experience with physical violence or danger, your first extended stay away from home, your first encounter with someone whose culture was very different from your own, or your first experience with the serious illness or death of a close friend or relative. Make sure your essay includes a thesis statement your narrative can support.

**Length: 500-750 words** (make each word count…you cannot go over 750 words)

**DUE: April 5**

Before you begin, write ONE sentence (see examples below) that encompasses your entire story so that you are clear on the point you want to make. This is probably your thesis, or a version of your thesis. After you write your essay, you should then rewrite and improve this sentence. This is the point that your story will prove/support.

Examples of starter sentences (preliminary thesis statements):

*I joined the army and was shocked at how brutal boot camp could be, but I learned very quickly that whatever doesn’t kill you will only make you stronger.*

*When my first love broke up with me, I learned (the hard way) that you have to first love yourself before someone else can love you back.*

*Getting arrested for vandalism in elementary school was the wakeup call that I needed to get on the right track.*

*My first job working at Baskin Robbins made me realize that life was not all fun and games, especially after I got fired.*

*The birth of my first child was a magical experience; becoming a mother changed the way I see the world and the way I see myself.*

Tips for good storytelling:

1. Use your natural storytelling voice, but don’t use slang unless you are quoting in dialogue and unless it’s really necessary.
2. Talk about what happened but also pause to explain what you were thinking (reflection). A good narrative is not just the story of what happened but the story of what you think about what happened.
3. Make sure to answer your audience’s questions before they can ask. Who was there? Where was this? When did this take place? What were people’s names? What did they say? What do you think now?
4. Use dialogue sparingly but effectively. “Don’t you *ever* say that to me again,” my mother said, glaring at me. “I *hate* you,” I said again. “*Hate, hate, hate*. There how do you like *that*?” Let dialogue tell the story of conversations whenever possible.
5. Read aloud and line edit carefully. As you read, can you hear sentences that require connections? Can you add transitions to improve the flow? Do you like how it sounds?