Choosing Topic for Memoir: So What?

The memoir is based on a memory in which you are the main character. While we all have special memories some are more story-worthy, ie: they are memories readers would love to hear about. As we have talked about in class and discovered in the memoirs we have read so far, the most interesting memoirs include conflict. They also have some universal appeal. The reader says to herself/himself “I recognize that problem; something similar happened to me once.” And as with any topic, it has to be the right size for the piece you are composing. In this case, you will be writing a 2-4 page, typed, double-spaced, memoir. You don’t want to choose a topic that would fill 20 pages.

The Rule of So What?

Good writing in any genre answers the question SO WHAT? Good writing has a purpose, a point, a reason it was written.

The good writer looks for and finds the meanings, the significances, the implications in the subject he or she has chosen.

Sometimes, the SO WHAT? is subtle and implicit. Sometimes it’s explicitly stated. But always a good reader finds something to think about because a good writer has found something to think about.

Robert Frost wrote, “No tears for the writer, no tears for the reader.” If you don’t find the deep meanings in your life or your characters’ lives, your readers won’t find meanings in their own.

A good writer often discovers the SO WHAT? through the thinking of the writing process. But even with hard thinking, some topics may not have a SO WHAT? These pieces can be abandoned or put on hold.

-From Nancie Atwell’s *Lessons that Change Writers.*