Reflective Writing

Reflection is a process that involves recollecting, remembering or recounting the experiences and reactions that have impacted people in some way. Reflective texts are thus more personal than other forms of communication and are used to explore and evaluate the impact these experiences have had on who we are, our values and our attitudes.

Reflection is a lot more common than it might seem: blogs, Facebook posts, music, films, news stories, speeches, films, biographies, diaries and so on all use elements of reflection in communicating experiences to various audiences.

What individuals reflect on can be quite broad and reflection can take place in both small and significant things. In reflective texts, people often include information about:

- The main people, places, events in their lives
- The main events in society (human achievements, political events, sporting events, popular culture, controversial ideas or events, developments in technology)
- People who are important to them
- Learning and emotional responses

The nature, purpose and content of reflective texts are also dependent on the author and audience context. For example, a personal diary has a different audience to a speech at a public event. Some of the broader purposes of the reflection include:

- Avoid making the same mistake again
- Improvement and development
- Growth and self-discovery
- Share experiences, reactions, mistakes and learning
- Human curiosity, intelligence and desire to learn

Language and Structural Elements of Reflective Genres

- First and Third Person language (emphasis on first person when reference to self; third person when describing events involving others)
- Past tense
- Concrete (reference to things that can be seen, heard, touched etc.) AND Abstract Language (references to ideas, beliefs, feelings, emotions)
- Connectives that show passage of time (e.g., then, after)
- Usually chronological sequence of events
- Use of other anecdotes to enhance reflection
- Enhanced reference to emotion and feeling when referring to events and impacts
- Personal vocabulary choices that reflect identity
- Reflection usually follows sequence of: DESCRIPTION > FEELINGS > ANALYSIS > EVALUATION