As William Zinsser's *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* makes clear, remembering significant details in our lives does not come as easily as we think it should. Often our memorable moments are not completely understood. The significance may be masked by something we don't want to face. For example, Mom's automobile accident may be memorable, but the fact that Mom was an alcoholic may resurface only after considerable effort. The memory of a wonderful friend during the summer of your thirteenth year may not seem directly related to sexual maturation, yet your readers will undoubtedly be thinking about that topic.

A second problem with memoir arrives in the form of the first person pronoun "I" --the word many journalists cannot force themselves to type. Of course, the inability to write personally simply deprives your readers of the subject matter you know best, with the most authenticity that you can write about most authoritatively.

This writing assignment challenges you to find the significance of some episode in your life, and to write about it so that readers can feel the power in the incident.

This needs not be terribly long, perhaps five or six pages. I don't want to read your entire life history—just one episode will be fine. Tell me a lot about a little, not a little about a lot. You need to set the scene, introduce the characters, bring your own feelings or understandings to the surface, and then let the action unfold. Not an easy task, but growing up wasn't easy either. The episode does not have to be earth shattering, but it does need to convey a meaning. Maybe you learned something about yourself or your friends or your parents. Maybe something about your culture or neighborhood or aspirations became clear. These things have happened to everyone. I can remember the day in my six-year-old life when, after years of going topless in the hot summer months, it now seemed obligatory to wear at least a t-shirt; the day in elementary school when it seemed that the Palmer Method of Handwriting was a laborious, pointless exercise in stifling individuality; the day on a dairy farm in Germany when I decided to change my major from German to history. Not that anything earth-shaking came from these episodes, but I can explain their significance for me.

**DUE THURSDAY, APRIL 20**

**REWRITE DUE TUESDAY, MAY 1**