Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Questions -**

**Journeys Personal Narrative Essay**

* **My Journey**
* **My Life Journey**
* **My Life**
* **My Story**
* **My Journey to the United States**

**Directions**: *Answer as many of these questions as you can. If you cannot answer a question by yourself, you need to ask/interview your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or any other family members who are older than you to find out the answer.*

*Remember who your audience is. Your personal narrative essay will be read by many Americans who have never been through this experience. You will have the opportunity to read it to your teachers and other Americans. Be as honest and open with them as you feel comfortable. This is your opportunity to share with them what it means to be an immigrant or refugee. Your stories are powerful and they will listen. You will change the lives of many people. They will have a better understanding of what you have been through in your lives and as a result, they will be able to support you and your families better. Also, many of our Juniors and Seniors have used these essays as their college entrance essay. It will save you a lot of work in the future.*

**INTRODUCTION**

1. What is your name?
2. **My full name is** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where you were born? (Write the place, city/town, country, and birth day)
4. **I was born in** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Hospital** **in** \_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **on** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. What language/s do you speak at home?
6. **I speak** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_ **at home.**
7. When did you come to the United States?
8. **I came to the United States on** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 2000.
9. How old were you when you came to the United States?
10. **I was** \_\_\_\_\_ **years old when I came to the** **United States.**

**BODY PARAGRAPH #1 – My Native Country**

1. What is your family’s native country?
2. **My family’s native country is** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. What year did your family leave the native country?
4. **My family left my native country in** \_\_\_\_\_\_. **We went to** \_\_\_\_ **in** \_\_\_\_\_\_. **Then, we went to the United States in** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. How old were you (or were you not born yet)?

**I was** \_\_\_\_\_ **when we left our native country.** OR**: I wasn’t born yet when my family left my native country.**

1. Why did your family leave the native and/or the second country?

**My family left my native country because**:

* There was a bad war.
* We were in a refugee camp and the living conditions were not good.
* The education system was too expensive and we wanted better education.
* We wanted to learn English.
* We wanted to open a business in the USA and earn a lot of money.
* We wanted earn more money in dollars.
* We didn’t have enough food and water.
* The government didn’t like our ethnic group and wanted us out.
* There was a dictator who was killing people from \_\_\_\_\_\_ group,
* We had a corrupt government,
* My family didn’t have access to good hospitals and medical care and my mother has a disease
* It was hard to get enough water everyday
* We didn’t have enough resources and things we needed for a comfortable life
* We didn’t feel safe and I can remember hearing banging sounds every night. We couldn’t sleep and we were scared.

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**BODY PARAGRAPH #2 – My Journey to the United States of America**

*In this paragraph, you will describe your journey to the United States.*

*Think about these questions to help you* ***brainstorm.*** *You don’t need to answer all of the questions. Only answer the questions that would make an interesting story. Remember, we don’t want to write a boring essay. You want your essays to be so interesting that the readers would prefer to read your essay instead of watching TV! If you don’t have enough space on the lines provided, you can write your answers on a separate sheet of paper as well.*

**Before you left:**

1. What was the immigration process like for your family? (You will probably want to ask your parents for help with this question.).

* When did you find out you were leaving? Where were you? Who told you?
* How/where did you get your visa? Did you go to a U.S. Consulate or Embassy to get the visa first?
* What did you have to leave behind in your country (that you couldn’t take with you)
* **The immigration process for my family was** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* I remember \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* I was eating dinner when my mother told me we were leaving.
* A white woman representative from the \_\_\_\_\_\_  
   came to talk to us about
* I remember the food on the airplane. It was \_\_\_\_
* I remember waiting in line at the U.S. embassy to get my visa
* We had to take a train to the airport.
* I had to leave behind my favorite toy

1. How did you or your family feel during the immigration process? (Ask them)

**During the immigration process, I felt\_\_\_\_\_\_. My family felt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**During the trip to the United States:**

1. While traveling to the United States, how did you feel? Were you excited, scared, concerned? What were you thinking about?

**While traveling to the United States, I felt\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I was thinking about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

1. How did your parent(s) and other family members feel during the trip? Were their feelings the same as yours or different? (*Ask them)*.

**While traveling to the United States, my family felt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I felt the same/different from my family because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

1. What family did you leave behind? How did you feel about that?

**I left behind family in my country. My \_\_\_\_ stayed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I felt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about that.**

1. On the plane and in the airports, could you understand what people were saying around you? How did you feel about that? (If you don’t remember, ask your parents.)

**On the airplane and in the airports, I could not understand what people were saying. I felt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about that?**

1. Did you like the food they served on the airplane or in the cities where you transferred flights?

**The airplane ride was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The food was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the airplane and airports.**

1. Were you missing your friends? Who did you miss?

**I missed \_\_\_\_\_, my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I also missed \_\_\_\_\_.**

**BODY PARAGRAPH #3 – My New Life in the United States**

*In this paragraph, you will describe what it was like when you first came to the United States.*

*Think about these questions to help you brainstorm. You don’t need to answer all of the questions. Only answer the questions that would make an interesting story. Remember, we don’t want to write a boring essay. We want our essays to be so interesting that the readers would prefer to read our essay instead of watching TV!*

1. What was your first experience in an American school like? Describe your first day or week. What happened? How did you feel?

For example: Had you ever seen a water fountain before? Had you ever used a locker before? Did you know how to open your locker? Did the teachers and students act differently than you expected? What did you think of the food? What did you think of your classes?

**My first experience in an American school was \_\_\_\_\_\_. On my first day, \_\_\_\_\_\_. I felt \_\_\_\_\_.**

**My teachers \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The other students \_\_\_\_\_.**

* **The school assigned a male Somali student to show me around and take me to my classes.**
* **The students helped me a lot when I first arrived**
* **We didn’t have school lunch in our school in my country, we had to bring a lunch.**
* **The food was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
* **The teachers were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
* **The classes were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
* **The teachers talked too much and I didn’t understand them.**

1. What was your new house like? How was it different than your other house? Think about the kitchen – stove, refrigerator, sink. Think about the bathroom – toilet, sink, tub. Think about electricity, furniture, telephone, etc. Describe your new house.

**My new house was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It was different from my house back home. It had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It was more/less \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ than my house in my country.**

* **In my country, the houses are made of cement and brick. In Buffalo, they’re mostly made of wood.**
* **In my country, I lived in a hut made of mud and leaves. We didn’t have electricity or running water inside the house. We had to walk to get water and we cooked in the ground.**
* **We got water from a well/pond in the ground and usually boiled it before we drank it.**
* **In my new house here, we have a sink, running water, electricity, central heating, and a toilet.**
* **Here, my house is bigger and has more space than in my country.**
* **Here, I have a smart phone but in my country I have a cell phones.**

**OPTIONAL BODY PARAGRAPHS**

***\*\*\*If your family did not go directly from the native country to the United States, you may want to add one or two body paragraphs to tell about that experience. If so, answer these questions:***

***(Optional) BODY – Journey to the First Place of Refuge***

1. What country did your family go to? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. How did they get there? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe what happened during the trip. Who helped them? Did they have any problems? Was it dangerous?

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***\*\*\*(Optional) BODY – Life in the First Place of Refuge***

1. How long did you live in their first place of refuge? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe what it was like to live in this place. Write about the problems and/or successes while living there.

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